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HARPER'S LIBRARY OF SELECT NOVELS.

Messrs. HARPER & BROTHERS beg leave to call attention to the following revised and enlarged list of their "Library of Select Novels," and to the *reduced prices*.

The list has been increased in number and interest by the addition of many works of fiction by leading novelists of the day, whose productions have hitherto appeared in more expensive form [see numbers 493 to 595 of accompanying list]. The series has been long before the public, and its interest and sterling value have been generally recognized. Well-informed readers of fiction have considered the appearance of a novel in this series to be always a guarantee of merit.

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1. Pelham. By Bulwer.....	\$ 40	77. Chevalier d'Harmental. By Dumas.....	\$ 35
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KILROGAN COTTAGE

A Novel

By MATILDA DESPARD



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KILROGAN COTTAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MISSIONARY MEETING.

IT was an important evening to the Wesleyan Methodists of Erna, this evening of the early spring, which comes to Ireland in such tender bloom and fragrance, for the Annual Missionary Meeting was to be held—brethren from Ceylon, from Caffraria, from countries whose chief interest lay in being so remote, so pagan, so perishing for lack of missionaries—Wesleyan Methodist missionaries.

The people of the Wesleyan Society were walking in groups up the high, narrow street, at the top of which stood the “preaching-house.” The plain old people still called it so, though the younger and more ambitious members of the society preferred naming it the Wesleyan Chapel.

An oblong, rough-cast, white building—at the sides tall windows with fan-light tops; one of the same on each side the door, and across the dim glass of these slanted the staircases, leading, one on either hand, up to the small end gallery. The guardians of its week-day renovation and its Sunday sanctity were lame Davy and his wife Peggy,

an old couple of Scotch descent, as are so many of the people of Fermanagh, the county in which the small town of Erna stood.

At this moment Peggy, with black gown and clean white cap, moved about the chapel, giving the last flip of her duster to form and pew and reading-desk. Old Davy carried a long pole with a lighted taper at its end, and with this he slowly and solemnly illuminated the mould-candles in the tin sconces hung on the walls, the brass branches at the pulpit, and, lastly, the old spider-like chandelier which hung from the middle of the ceiling.

A platform, covered with a handsome carpet, was erected about the desk and pulpit; dark mahogany arm-chairs stood in a semicircle upon it, waiting for the reverend brethren. Some banners, mottoes, and other efforts at decoration appeared on walls and windows; fresh matting was laid at the entrance.

As Davy completed the lighting-up, the dazzling sight was greeted with a loud cheer from the boys outside. The

"preaching-house" was splendid, transformed in the eyes of the young spectators into a scene from "Aladdin" or "The Forty Thieves." Another shrill acclamation was rising, but fell suddenly as Davy limped out and came upon them.

"Hould yer whisht, ye young vil-yans! Hev ye na mair respeeck fur the hoose o' God nor to rise sich a whillaw-fornint it? Be aff, every mother's son o' ye! Neddy Burns, go home an' wash yer face, an' be ready to come to the meetin' wid yer dacent mother. Tim Dooley, it's ketchin' it ye'll be if ye're here a minit longer!"

With many admonitions and threats he dispersed the small rabble, and he was only in time, for already the congregation had begun to assemble. The lowlier part came first—small tradespeople and mechanics from the town; farmers, with wives and children, from the neighboring country, decently clothed, sober-visaged, and of circum-spect bearing. These sat mostly on forms or benches nearer the door, leaving the enclosed seats farther up for the townspeople, the "quality" of the Methodist society, and the stranger visitors.

With great urbanity but conscious importance, Davy preceded these visitors, people of standing and substance in Erna, to the best seats, but taking care to reserve the preacher's pew unoccupied until the rightful tenant should arrive—Miss Eleanor Crawford, the preacher's only child.

She and her father were already coming up the High Street through the pure air and the soft light of early evening, giving friendly greeting to the brethren and sisters who were also going to the preaching-house, though they did not join or mingle with any of the groups of the congregation.

The preacher was an old man, white-haired and stooping a little, of gentle, courteous bearing, attentive and chivalrous to the young girl at his side as if he had been born and bred in a royal court. Entering the chapel, Mr. Crawford led his daughter to the pew allotted to the preacher's use, then left her, and retired to the small vestry-room opening from the rear of the platform. There he met the brethren already arrived, and awaited the coming of the rest of the chairmen of the meeting.

It would not be paying due regard to the dignity of Eleanor Crawford, and her place in our story, if we did not look attentively at her as she sits in the half shadow of the square, high pew. She was but a year or two past twenty, but, with her sedate and self-possessed demeanor, looked older. Those who could get beyond the clear light of her eyes to find their color would have seen it to be gray, deep and dark; her face would have been a perfect oval, but that the chin was too square to leave the outline complete; but whatever firmness that and the mouth indicated was turned to perfect sweetness by the lurking dimple, the fresh red of the lips, the delicate, changing color of the cheeks. Abundance of brown hair shaded her broad, fair forehead; her stately white neck and throat gave to her bearing, perhaps, a tinge of hauteur not consistent with the Methodist spirit of humility; but Eleanor was as fresh and modest, if she was as queenly, as a rose.

Her book of hymns was held open, but she used it more as a screen from behind which she could look at the people and the faces now filling the house, almost all strange to her, than for a devout study of the sacred poe-

try; for we might as well confess that Miss Crawford was not a devout Methodist.

There was a flutter of excitement all through the chapel. The chairman, Mr. North, and his party had arrived. The party, consisting of Mrs. North and two gentlemen, were seated in the pew with Eleanor. Mr. North joined the missionaries and the brethren in the vestry-room, then with them ascended the platform, and, after proper introduction and induction, took his place in the chair.

John Wellington North, Esquire, of North Villa, County Fermanagh, was considered by the Wesleyans of Erna as highly eligible to the honor of filling the chair on missionary and other important occasions; indeed, conferring more dignity and importance than he received. He was a Churchman, but friendly to the Wesleyans. A magistrate, and, as he hoped, a future Member of Parliament, it was wisdom to conciliate all classes, show tolerance to all creeds. Mrs. North's condescension in honoring the meeting was also highly esteemed. Her lady-like presence, gracious manner, and fashionable attire were a great attraction to the wives and daughters of the society.

The meeting opened with the singing of the hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains"—a staple musical "piece" which, though not in the collection of Wesleyan hymns at that day, was used much at these missionary meetings. Being pretty well known, it was sung through—not given out in rememberable portions of two lines—a quaint fashion originating in a scarcity of literary ability and printed hymns among the early Methodists, still extant in many places of their worship in more remote and unenlightened

parts of Ireland. Then, rising from the chair, John Wellington North, Esquire, began his speech with a sonorous "Ahem!"

He rose, as chairman of this meeting, to express his warm sympathies with, his cordial approval of, its object. His good friends did not need to be told that the Wesleyan missionaries had ever been foremost in the field of Gospel labor. In the burning climes of Africa, the fatal fever-swamps of the coast of Guinea, they had sacrificed their lives by hundreds to bear to the perishing people the glad truths of the Gospel. Where now would the heathen be but for their efforts? Still in the darkness of paganism, the deplorable ignorance of idolatry! His worthy and respected fellow-townsmen would this evening be favored with wonderful accounts of the perils braved, the work accomplished, the souls of whole families of pagans plucked as brands from the burning—of prosperous schools and meeting-houses now flourishing where the car of Juggernaut had remorselessly rolled, and where the delusions of idolatry had beclouded the minds and hearts of cannibals and many other dreadful species of heathen.

But the chairman would not longer detain his highly esteemed friends from the great pleasure and privileges in store for them, in listening to the gentlemen—the reverend missionary brethren who had come so far to address them.

Mr. North might have spun out his well-worn commonplaces if his eye had not caught the silent admonition of Mrs. North's mild blue orb; it said plainly, "Don't be tiresome: enough!" and he sat down straightway, and beamed on the meeting in amiable

and florid benignity for the remainder of the evening.

There is no need to repeat or describe at any length the speeches which followed: wonder-stories which amused and awed the simple people: unbounded laudation of Wesleyanism and its great missionary triumphs; many really true and touching incidents of sorrow, loss, and self-renunciation—of devotion of ardent, single-minded missionaries, men and women, to the great cause; and, lastly, appeals for money—money to send the Gospel to the heathen, to carry the story and the teaching of the Christ-life to savages yet too low in the scale of creation to comprehend its first principles or learn the A B C of civilization. Then the speaker would utter denunciations on those who were so narrow-minded as to wish to keep missionary labor for home use, in the Donegal mountains, along the wild coast fisheries, and around the miserable bog-lands.

The "preaching-house" grew hot and stifling. Eleanor sat, wearied of the weak arguments, invocations, and conclusions of the speech-making brethren, and longed for it all to come to an end. Mrs. North thought impatiently of the lovely drive by the Lake which she might have been enjoying, instead of fidgeting in this, to her, stuffy, stupid meeting. Her nephew, young Frank Stanley, yawned, and made plans for the morrow's fishing. But Gerald Rohan, the remaining occupant of the pew, found the time by no means tedious; for he was using his eyes in looking at Eleanor Crawford, and his thoughts in wondering how such loveliness had come there. He felt as much surprised to see that face as if he had found a fair jewel in the dust of the way-side.

At last the missionary meeting con-

cluded with the singing of the Doxology, the people rising with much animation and many interchanges of greeting, expressions of pleasure at what they had heard, and comments on the speakers' eloquence.

Having exchanged civilities with the missionaries and the local brethren, Mr. North approached the pew where his wife was still standing, and Mr. Crawford, following, addressed the lady and received an introduction to all her party, in which Eleanor next shared. As Mr. Rohan was presented, Mr. Crawford repeated the name.

"I think, if you are of the County Leitrim, sir, I must have the pleasure of your good mother's acquaintance."

"It is very likely, Mr. Crawford; my mother was always interested in your people. Many of the Wesleyan ministers came to Annadale when I was a boy. But," he added, "since my great loss—my mother's death—the house has been almost closed."

Mr. Crawford looked much grieved: he had never heard of the death of Mrs. Rohan, a lady who had been not only a friend to the preachers, but almost an angel of goodness to the poor people on her estate and through the whole parish.

He expressed his deep sorrow, and assented heartily to Mr. Rohan's request to be allowed to visit him and tell him of his mother's last years. As the party made their way to the door and the open air, Mrs. North apologized to Eleanor for having been so tardy in calling or seeking her acquaintance.

"I have such a houseful of little people, and so very much to do in visiting and receiving company, that, indeed, I have not yet been able to find time; but I should be so glad if you

would come to see me! I hear you are such a fine musician, and I would like you to judge of my daughter's talents and progress."

Eleanor smiled. Mrs. North did not seem to her to be so overweighted by household cares or active employment; but she answered civilly, if a little constrainedly,

"Thank you, Mrs. North. I, too, am always busy; for when my father is at home, I seldom leave him; and when he is away, I find many things to keep me occupied in the hours left after my daily duties at Miss Henley's school."

"Ah, yes! I know that all Wesleyan ministers are absent from home so much of the time. It must be very dull and lonely for you when your father is away."

"I suppose habit helps us to bear it better than the children of fathers as dear as mine is to me could hope to do if they have not been brought up to the life of Methodist preachers' daughters," said Eleanor, looking at her father tenderly.

"She feels her position quite properly," thought Mrs. North. Then, as she stepped into her carriage—"I hope you *will* come and see me at North Villa. Can we not appoint a day for

you and Mr. Crawford to pay us a visit? I would gladly send the carriage to Erna for you."

A refusal was on Eleanor's lips, but before she could utter it, young Stanley—Rohan wondered what good genius had inspired him—remarked to his aunt,

"Perhaps Miss Crawford will consent to join the party which I have planned for Georgy and Fred, to go boating on the Lough." Eleanor looked at the lad's bright, pleasant face: she could not keep the coldness of her intended reply to Mrs. North, as she answered,

"I should like to do so very much. I know nothing of the scenery of Lough Erne, which they say is so beautiful."

"Well, then," said Mrs. North, "Mr. Rohan shall take you a message as to when we elders too can go, and you will not refuse to come with *us*, as you were willing to accompany the young people."

Eleanor had scarcely anticipated that, but she could not be so ungracious as to retract; and with a more cordial tone she bade Mrs. North and her friends good-night, and, taking her father's arm, turned down High Street to the more thickly populated part of the town.





CHAPTER II.

PIOUS ORGIES.

"A PLEASANT lady, Eleanor," said Mr. Crawford, "and Mr. Rohan is agreeable and intelligent. I must have seen him when he was a little boy at the time I was travelling on the Monhill circuit. His father was killed by a fall from his horse, leaving a young widow, with this one child. Mrs. Rohan was interested in our people, and showed great kindness to the preachers and their families."

"Was she a Methodist, father?"

"No, my dear. Her husband and all his family were bitterly opposed to all dissenters and Catholics, and I suppose Mrs. Rohan never even thought of going against their prejudices. She was of English birth, but her warm heart quickly understood and loved Ireland and its people. She saw how much Methodism in its first mission to Ireland was doing for the poor and neglected Protestants. She often talked with me of Wesley, and recalled the stories of his life which she had heard in her youth. It was of one of her aunts that Mrs. Rohan told me an anecdote, which makes me laugh to remember it, even now. She was an elderly lady of high fashion, but was often drawn to hear Mr. Wesley's preaching. One evening she sat in a church where he held a service, in the front seat of the gallery, wearing a large bonnet

with a tall ostrich plume. The heat, and perhaps the weight of her head-dress, made her drowsy, and presently Mr. Wesley's eye was attracted by the waving plume of feathers, which at intervals sunk slowly forward, then, with a sudden start, was brought back to its proper position. Strong as the preacher's will was, he could hardly keep the thread of his discourse. The good lady's head fascinated his gaze, as, more and more frequently, it nodded and sunk, till at last a violent jerk dashed off bonnet and plume, and, while the poor lady's hands clutched wildly and vainly after it, toppled over the ledge and fell with a loud flutter into the seat below! It was impossible for Wesley to go on: his strong sense of humor took away breath and self-possession. He stooped behind the desk, and in an agony of suppressed laughter whispered to the brother who sat with him in the pulpit, 'Tommy, Tommy! don't laugh! *Don't* laugh, Tommy dear!'

Heartily joining in her father's amusement, Eleanor walked on with him in the bright starlight till they reached the house of the "leading brother," who entertained the missionaries in the most hospitable and liberal manner at these annual festivals. This was one of the dwellings of the wealth-

ier tradesmen in Erna. It stood in the Diamond, the square of the small town. Here Mr. Crawford had been invited, with his daughter, to meet at supper the foreign brethren and some "friends" of the Methodist society. Mr. Wright, the chief linen-draper of Erna, was the host; a strong pillar and authority in the Wesleyan body and in the town. He was an old man, having already, as he expressed it, "given two of his wives to the Lord." Their successor was now in the full plenitude of her power. Large-framed, silent, imposing; a model house-keeper, a good step-mother, stolid and unimpressible to a degree, she had yet one ambition. The great aim of her life was at these entertainments to eclipse her sister-in-law Wright of the Hill. *She* was Mrs. Wright of the Diamond.

As Eleanor and her father entered the old-fashioned but solidly and handsomely furnished drawing-room, they found a number of people assembled, and an almost worldly air of festivity pervading the company. The missionaries were naturally the lions and the objects of fervent attention. Eager young ladies surrounded them, pressing for information, for encouragement in missionary-box and other fund-producing efforts. More elderly sisters sat closely by them, seeking confirmation of the accounts of remarkable conversions from the most benighted heathenism to all the graces of Christianity. The younger and domestic preachers, who were consequently so much less interesting, hovered around the oldish maidens, a little gloomy discontent embittering their otherwise festive air, a doubt of the perfect fairness of the Providential dealings which had allotted to them the mere farm-

work of the Gospel, while these other of their brethren had been conveyed in golden chariots, as it were, into the tropical gardens, the glorious vineyards of the Lord.

Supper being announced, all descended to the dining-room with lively talk and small jests, kept from dangerous frivolity and worldliness by occasional remarks of edifying piety properly intermingled. A long dining-table, with outlying colonies of claw tables and sideboards, accommodated the guests, who were quickly seated at the rich and well-ordered repast. One or two side-dishes of complicated and scientific compounding had resulted perfectly, and Mrs. Wright of the Diamond sat at the head of her table, splendid in plum-colored silk, contented to the core of her solid bosom, for everything was as handsome as it could be; and Sister Wright of the Hill was there to behold it.

A blessing was duly implored over the feast. Little Miss Riley, a "stirring" member and sister, smothered an impious doubt of the necessity of the benediction on the superfluous meal, and a reflection that, as it had been already three times solemnly asked upon that day's nourishment, it might now be omitted. But she coughed penitentially, and responded fervently to the devout exclamation of Sister Quigley, "How gracious! How refreshing!" And Mrs. Quigley was a widowed sister, who had come through afflictions and dispensations which conferred special distinction on her, and peculiarly qualified her to pronounce upon the piety and excellence of all outpourings.

Miss Riley found herself next to one of the distinguished missionaries, and immediately turned to him with a

countenance of suave and deferential attention.

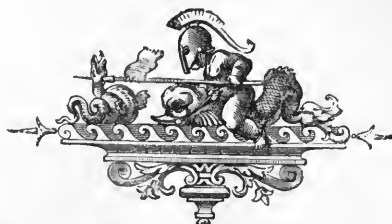
"You would wish, I have no doubt, dear Mr. Guineaman, to have some of your foreign friends here to-night. How delightful it would be if we could hold sweet converse with your lambs saved from the slaughter, your brands plucked from the burning! I suppose they are true children of nature, or I should say rather of grace, since your ministry has blessed them."

Mr. Guineaman responded with some fitting remarks, yet the amused smile on his face did not show a belief that the comfort of the assembly would be increased by the presence of most of his converts, even in their new state of grace.

The supper-table sitting was prolonged, good cheer and racy anecdotes circulated briskly—for, after all, no amount of religious gravity can quite repress the light-heartedness and sense of humor native to the Irish character—and the softer emotions of the young sisters and brethren were relieved by many sly and demure little episodes of what in worldlings would have been called downright flirtation. Eleanor, sitting by her father, looked

on, keenly aware of the humorous phase of this intensely human enjoyment of the good things of sensuous life, clad in its utterly incongruous garb of pretension to religious self-renunciation. The easy worldliness and open unrestraint of Mrs. North seemed to her the honester, as it was the pleasanter, of the two. Rising from table, the company reassembled in the drawing-room. Again the missionaries were called on for "information;" some "sacred" music, some mild love-making, town gossip, and plans for next year's missionary campaign followed; and at length a sonorous and eloquent prayer from the most learned and distinguished of the foreign visitors concluded this notable and memorable season of refreshment among the upper class of the Wesleyan Methodists at Erna.

Eleanor, glad to be released from the restraint of society where she was conscious of being an uncongenial and unsympathetic guest, went out into the soft, still air, and, taking her father's arm, walked slowly home, comforted and quieted by the divine radiance which fell over her from the innumerable shining, watchful eyes in the midnight skies above.





CHAPTER III.

NORTH VILLA AND THE HERO.

IN a pretty dwelling, half villa, half cottage, a little way out of the town of Erna, lived Mr. North, the chairman of the Methodist Missionary Meeting. A stout, honest-hearted country gentleman, blessed with a handsome wife and a blooming family, he was perfectly loyal to Church and State, yet always ready to lend his countenance to the Wesleyans, considering them as a sort of poor relations of the English Establishment whom it would be mean to refuse to recognize. His wife was the daughter of a baronet, and felt her importance among the gentry of the neighborhood. She was a large, fair woman, on the sunny side of forty. White lace, bright ribbons, and flowers mingled with her blonde ringlets, and floated round her in a kind of beatified millinery. She was like a sunny summer which had caught and kept a blossomy spring to grace and drape her comeliness. One would have thought she had come from a world where cold and hunger and pain had never been, and that to those evils she would forever be a stranger; her smooth forehead fading into age unwrinkled, her blue eyes closing peacefully on a world whose brightness and pleasantness only had met them. In her rich, soft voice one could just detect what "nice" people in Ireland called an accent, but

which was really that charming echo of the brogue so piquant in an educated person's speech.

As they sat in the carriage returning home, the meeting and some of the people were discussed. "It was so close, so dim and stuffy in there, I could hardly keep my eyes open," said Mrs. North, who indeed had a tendency to somnolency on slight provocation.

"What! even when they told of the giant Caffre who spelled so sweetly 'Black man bad, white man all good,'" said young Stanley, maliciously.

"And you were unconcerned at the remarkable account of a whole African town converted by a roast missionary which disagreed with them," added Rohan.

Mrs. North laughed.

"Nay, now, you shall not laugh at my Wesleyan friends," said Mr. North. "At least you have to thank me for making you acquainted with Mr. Crawford, a true gentleman and a real Christian, and that lovely girl, his daughter."

"Well, she certainly is very pretty, and such wonderfully good style for one in her class," assented Mrs. North, too complacently aware of her own attractions to deny praise to other beauties.

"Of what class is she a member,

then?" asked Mr. Rohan. "It seemed to me she was in every sense a lady."

"Ladies don't generally earn their bread by teaching a day-school, as Miss Crawford at present does," said Mrs. North, with a little sharpness. "We *must* keep up these distinctions of class."

Rohan did not answer, but pondered on the many grades of the "society" who would have carefully counted the steps below their own and Mrs. North's "class."

A few minutes brought them to North Villa, and they entered the drawing-room, the especial domain of the lady of the house. It was prettily, almost luxuriously, furnished in the fashion of the day—white carpet with flowers blooming in gorgeous colors, satin-covered chairs, sofas, and centre divan, silken curtains, and living flowers growing in many pretty devices of vase and stand and wardian case. Outside the French windows lay a lawn with little terraces, groups of trees and shrubs and parterres, arranged without much regard to landscape gardening in its more correct principles, but too pretty to let even a critical person quarrel with it.

A supper was served to them here, which harmonized with the surroundings in its lightness, tastefulness, and freedom from heavy stiffness and formality—a direct contrast to the entertainment at which Miss Crawford was just then undergoing penance. Georgiana, Mrs. North's eldest daughter, and Miss Irwin, an elderly lady, half governess, half relative, were invited to join the party in the drawing-room by special indulgence, and Mr. North, Frank Stanley, and Mr. Rohan proceeded to discuss their plans for enjoying

on the morrow the sport which the trout streams near Erna afforded.

We will not stop here to describe this last-mentioned member of the party very particularly. Gerald Rohan must be the exponent of his own character, which, indeed, was as yet only a half-formed one, waiting the hard discipline of life to mould it into a noble and enduring shape. But his outside seeming is too attractive to allow us to pass it by without trying to embody him in the mind's eye of the reader. He was tall and lithe of figure, with handsome and strongly modelled features lit by eyes full of the intense spirit of life and the enjoyment of it which made them now sparkling with mirth, now lustrous with feeling. His hair and beard were very dark and kept rather closely trimmed, and his color, pure flush of youth and health when a lad, had been turned to a browner and more manly tinge by exposure to air and sun. His manner had the unembarrassed grace and open-heartedness which so often distinguish the educated and travelled Irishman: perhaps, also, he bore in it just a little too much consciousness of superiority to the mass of his fellow-creatures; but his ready tact, his thoroughly generous nature, surrounded this thorn of pride as with a gracious leafage which seldom allowed of wounding contact with its sharp sting. Mr. Rohan was in appearance younger by three or four years than his real age, now nearly twenty-eight. In Mr. North's house he always met the cordial welcome due to the son of a dear friend. And there he spent most of his holidays—if there were any part of his life which could be specially disengaged in an existence which resembled too much one unbroken holiday.



CHAPTER IV.

METHODISM IN IRELAND.

OF all the countries in which Methodism obtained an ardent following, Ireland was probably the one where the hearts of the poor and neglected opened most warmly to the new spiritual life which it brought. It was in Ireland that John Wesley found the strongest encouragement and justification of what might well be called his reformation of the Church of England. Always unhappy in their religious history, the Irish people were cruelly torn and set at variance by the imposition of the English Church Establishment on the resentful and unwilling Roman Catholic population. Presbyterianism, the Scotch importation to the North of Ireland, held itself strictly aloof from either party; and thus the many descendants of English, French, and other European Protestants who kept the faith of their ancestors, either went to no place of worship, or attended the one service held each Sunday in the parish church in a listless torpor of mind, never roused there by spiritual sustenance to warmth and vital religion.

A hundred years ago it would have been rare indeed to find the spiritual head of a parish, the rector, preaching or praying in his church. But at noon each Sunday the bell of city, town, or

country parish rang out a sleepy summons to worship.

The curate, the needy, ill-paid, hired servant of the absent or indolent rector, entering the vestry-room, put on a white robe and bands, strode solemnly to the reading-desk, and doled out, as a matter of official requisition, such portions of the English Prayer-book as would serve for the morning's duties. A parish clerk croaked the responses or whined out the "amen;" pitched the tune (when any semblance of music was attainable), to which chant and psalm might be said or sung; attended the minister to the vestry, assisted him in the substitution of a black robe for the white one, and preceded him to the foot of the pulpit-stairs, which, having seen the preacher ascend, the clerk, conscious of duties all fulfilled, then betook himself and his "amen" to a sheltered nook behind his desk, where a tranquil slumber refreshed his quiet mind.

Above, the curate droned out a weak starveling of a discourse, often merely one of the printed homilies of the Church of England. Inane and inconsequent, it was happily brief; and when its conclusion was signified by the ascription "Now unto, etc," the few listeners, with a simultaneous movement

of satisfaction and alacrity (the first of that kind through it all), rose to their feet, shook themselves awake, and dispersed with the score of religious duty cleared for another week.

But at the coming of Wesley and his disciples there was a shaking of these dry bones, a rending of the scales and cobwebs that blinded and choked all spiritual life. Preachers were stationed in almost every town, whence they rode over a circuit many miles in extent. Over wild mountain roads, through untracked bogs, in the by-ways and lanes, went the preacher on his sober, strong horse, with well-filled saddle-bags depending on either side (replaced in later years by the more compact and seemly valise). From one farm-house to another the tidings went, "The preacher is coming!" The farmer best able (though all, indeed, were disposed) to receive him sent word to friends and neighbors that his house was to be the place of meeting.

The good-wife bestirred herself to air her homespun linen and spread the one spare bed (often the poorer farmers would give up their own); the best piece of bacon was taken down from the kitchen rafters to be boiled; and maybe, if the housewife were thrifty, there would be a chicken for the pot or a goose for the spit; the huge iron boiler, hung on the long crane over the glowing peat-fire, filled with laughing potatoes which bubbled and spluttered till they were teemed into the shallow basket of unpeeled osiers, the "skip," where, slanting before the hot turf coals, the last touch of perfection was given to their white, mealy substance.

Then the earthen-floored kitchen, swept with the broom, or *besom*, of

fresh purple heather, was set out with a deal table, and on the homespun-linen cloth the delft ware and pewter from the dresser were placed to do honor to the coming of the preacher.

When evening fell, from the farms on the hill-side and the low-lying bog land, from comfortable cottage and miserable cabin, the people flocked—the Adamses, the Reids, the Burnses, the Scotts, and Humphreys, with other names indicating French or Welsh or more Northern origin. The large kitchen and best rooms were filled with such seats and benches as could be had. The preacher moved among the people with words of friendly greeting and interest. Then, when the gathering was complete, he took his place behind a table or a high-backed wooden chair, and giving out one of Wesley's or Fletcher's hymns, led the untrained voices in the singing. A few verses read from the Bible followed, one of which he took for his text, and preached therefrom to these poor, unlettered, but loving and kindly people. It was verily the power of the Spirit. The life and death of the Redeemer, his resurrection and perpetual intercession, were brought among them almost as with a bodily presence. They must follow this great Exemplar: life was worth nothing but to offer up in imitation of him, and they must repent and be converted by the direct evidence and communication of the Spirit with their own; till that was obtained there was no sure ground for hope. Before every soul were two roads; one led to heaven, the other to hell: a hell of endless torture and agony—fiery, but dark with the blackness of everlasting despair; a heaven of endless Sabbaths of praise and communion with Christ and God, and com-

panionship of holy angels, for the enjoyment of which the act of conversion would fit them even in death's last agony. The soul that turned to Christ would enter on everlasting bliss. Flee from the wrath to come—escape from the punishment of an incensed Deity: that was life's best, only aim and end.

Such was the theology that roused and fired the hearts of the hearers of Wesley's followers, and brought with it a rude savor of life unto life; inasmuch as fanaticism is higher than spiritual atrophy, and any faith in or conception of eternal life, even simple and crude as was that of these enthusiasts, is better than a swinish wallowing in low materialism.

These poor people, naturally affectionate and hopeful, took the brighter side home to their hearts more than the terrible parts of the doctrine. A deep reverence and love for the preacher supplied them with the elements of hero and saint worship which their Protestantism denied them. The literature which the Methodists published and circulated was, it is true, narrow and circumscribed; but it awoke a love of books and an ambition for the education of their children.

But that which elevated the first Methodist preachers to the dignity of the true missionary of the Gospel was the great influence which they acquired

over the daily lives of the peasants. Their coming was a festival; the preparations for it brought into play every feeling of self-respect and hospitality. Always coming from a rank above the greater part of their people, often possessing the education and habits of gentlemen, the preachers preached by their friendly counsel and taught by their example the gospel of cleanliness and sobriety, gentle manners, wholesome food, and dry habitations. Blessed be such messengers, under whatsoever banner of faith they come!

The vast growth and spread of Methodism throughout Christendom have naturally caused it to outgrow this early simple form. But though it has taken its place as one of the great divisions of Protestantism, it can never surely lose the vitality, the earnestness, and the missionary spirit which characterized its upspringing, perhaps in a greater measure than any other denomination. In the history of the religious movements of Christendom, the name of John Wesley must always represent one of the most eloquent, most pathetic outbursts of human longing for spiritual life and divine revelation, and a faith which had its birth in the throes of earnest souls striving for a higher spiritual existence in this world and in their hopes of the life to come.





CHAPTER V.

THE PREACHER'S FAMILY.

THE Rev. James Crawford had been appointed to the Erna circuit by the Methodist Conference, and had been a resident of that small town since the previous summer. With his wife and Nannie Humphreys, the little maid of all work, the best and most helpful of her class, he had occupied the small house allotted to the residing preacher's family.

The winter was passed in the utmost seclusion; for Mrs. Crawford was an invalid, seldom able to attend even the Sunday service conducted by her husband. The preacher's only daughter was absent, a governess in the South of Ireland; and, with the exception of a short vacation in the holidays, had not lived in Erna until, late in the winter, she had been summoned to attend the last illness of her mother.

After Mrs. Crawford's death had made the small household still smaller, Miss Crawford resigned her charge in Lady Stanley's family, feeling that henceforth her father must be her chief care. Until the close of the year he could not enter the list of superannuated preachers; his duties must all be fulfilled—the long rides and evening meetings through the country during the week, the Sunday preachings in town. All his daughter's affection and companionship were needed to minis-

ter to his comfort and to lessen his grief. She had applied for, and obtained, a position in the young ladies' day-school of Erna, an institution long established, and admirably conducted by Miss Henley.

Miss Crawford's time was busily occupied, and left no idle hours for the visiting and gossiping which were the chief employment of the young ladies of Erna. So it happened that she was almost a stranger in the town, nor had the "Society" been able to pronounce a verdict on her character and manners in its usual thorough and conclusive way.

Mr. Crawford was one of the generation of preachers which followed immediately after Wesley and his contemporaries. He was the youngest son of a gentleman of good property in one of the middle counties of Ireland—one of that old race of squires who rode hard, drank deep, and played high. The mother of James Crawford was greatly superior to most of the wives and mothers of the time. Her pure nature and devout mind strongly influenced the character of her youngest son; and when a severe attack of pulmonary disease brought him more than ever under her care, her teachings and counsels decided the religious bent of his mind. Upon his recovery, he

at once entered upon the four years of probation which precede ordination to the regular ministry in the Wesleyan Society. The out-door life and exercise on horseback which his new calling necessitated, completed the young man's cure. He grew tall and robust, and from his healthy cheek and frame all trace of disease vanished. Among the people to whom he preached he was almost an object of worship, his gentle breeding and gracious, kindly manner at once winning their hearts: the poorer of his hearers looked up to him with entire reverence and love, and those who were his equals in education and habits of life found him a genial companion as well as an example of sincere and devoted Christian life. It was in the last year of his probation that he met Ellen Moore, the daughter of a yeoman farmer in the County Fermanagh, whose house opened to receive the disciples of Wesley. Modest and simple, but with great native force of character, this young girl won Mr. Crawford's tender and abiding love, and he soon drew from her such response to his feelings as encouraged him to ask old Walter Moore for this, his only daughter.

To Ellen Moore the young preacher appeared, not only as her ideal husband, but as the guide who would lead her to the highest, most spiritual life. Her parents, loving and indulgent, gave up the prospect of a wealthier suitor, and in the second year of Mr. Crawford's regular ministry Ellen Moore left her home of comfort, and her life of freedom from care and fatigue, to take up the one of privation, unrest, and frequent loneliness which, as a preacher's wife, she must henceforth accept.

For thirty years of wedded life they

dwelt in love and peace with each other; but their outward circumstances were sadly opposed to all ideas of comfort and enjoyment. From circuit to circuit the preacher must move at the decree of the Conference, at intervals of one, two, or at most three years. No sooner had habitation and friends in one place become home-like and familiar than the preacher's wife must set herself to lift her household gods and move to the new, brief shelter. Only to the children was the "moving" the great event and frolic of their life. There were four children born to the Crawfords, but an epidemic had swept through the country where they were and left them childless, but for this one daughter, Eleanor of our story.

It was not strange, therefore, that this last beloved child, spared, as they believed, to their heart-wrung prayers, should be to both parents the one central interest in their life. How best to guide and train this darling child was their chief thought. At first the dominant idea of evangelical religion, the salvation of her soul, seemed the only worthy object, and Mrs. Crawford had striven to implant in her love and obedience to every rule of the Methodist discipline.

But something of persistent if unconscious opposition which she met in the mind of Eleanor, in all else so docile and loving, led the mother to a closer scrutiny of the principles and ordinances of the sect. Her own mind, ripened by life and its experiences, found many things repugnant which in earlier years she had undoubtedly accepted. Little by little she ceased to constrain Eleanor's religious inclinations; and while seeking for the best mental sustenance for her

child she felt her own spirit enlightened, strengthened, and enlarged. Very soon she had placed her mental life outside of the narrow pale of that religion which, in the exaggerated views natural to newly awakened religious enthusiasm, and in the ardor of its inexperienced zeal, would have its disciples regard life as a vain show—a delusion, whose every joy and delight must be put aside and trampled underfoot, whose short span was of no value save as it gave a brief space to prepare to meet an exacting, jealous Deity.

Mrs. Crawford's unceasing efforts were directed toward obtaining for Eleanor the best conditions for growth in light and knowledge. Sacrificing her delight in the presence of her child, she sent her to a school at a distance, where education reached the highest standard of the day; and when the summer and Christmas holidays had brought Eleanor home to the little household, the happiness which the mother felt in the growth and expansion of her daughter's mind fully repaid her for her self-denial. Unrestrained love and recognition of each other's growth and progress almost atoned to both for the long months of separation.

A few more years passed, and Mr. Crawford was still going the rounds of his circuit, now in one part of Ireland, now in another, diligently preaching to and exhorting, teaching and comforting, the poor people among whom he chiefly labored. But the life of fatigue and exposure was telling rapidly on him; his head was whiter, his shoulders more bent than his years should have found them. His gentle, affectionate nature, while it forbade him to impose any restrictions or obligations

on the conscience of his wife and daughter, made him tremble lest in leaving the old, safe harbor of implicit belief in the rules and doctrines of their faith, they might drift into what was to him the stormy sea of advancing thought.

When, in her eighteenth year, Eleanor left school, her mother accepted for her the offer of a place as governess to the young children of a gentleman in the County Wicklow. His wife and Mrs. Crawford had been close friends in girlhood, and Eleanor's mother knew that in her home she would find a bright and easy opening to the path of her governess life.

Almost of the same age as Sir William Stanley's elder daughters, Eleanor shared in their more advanced studies while teaching the little ones of the family; and, in the society of the household and its many guests, she was quickly learning the highest meaning of education and refinement. But Mrs. Crawford's health, which she had for some months felt was becoming seriously impaired, suffered from the loss of Eleanor's companionship; and now, by one of those strange chances which befall even the most tranquil and obscure lives, Mr. Crawford was assigned to the circuit of Erna, the town close to the birthplace of Ellen Moore, Kilrogan Cottage, where she had met and wedded James Crawford.

In the thirty years which had elapsed since she had left it a bride, father, mother, and brothers were dead and gone. The farm of Kilrogan, still a "freehold," had passed into the possession of the widow of David, eldest son of old Walter Moore. Childless and miserly, she lived almost the life of a hermit, save that she went occasionally to Presbyterian meeting or Methodist

preaching, disposed to the solid respectability of the first or the ardent outpourings of the last by the state of the crops and markets, and as she was thus influenced to a buoyant or a despairing contemplation of life and her eternal interests.

The effect on Mrs. Crawford of finding herself again in the scenes of her early life only to know that she was an alien, wrongfully deprived of all to which she had a right, could not be other than depressing and injurious. Her strength declined rapidly, and, feeling that her days were numbered, she sent for Eleanor. While her life was fading quietly away, the mother was hardly a moment separated from her child. To their perfect love and communion death could bring but an outward parting, leaving the divine consolation of a higher union when death's narrow river should be safely crossed.

When the wife and mother, so loving and so beloved, was laid in the graveyard on the green and flower-studded hill-side where many generations of the Moores slept, Eleanor found no time for the indulgence of selfish sorrow. Her father, broken and aged by his grief, claimed all her care. When he was again able to resume his labors, the occupation which she had secured at Miss Henley's school fortunately called her from her lonely home and supplied healthful interest and employment to Eleanor's mind and powers. In her father's presence she kept a brave courage and a bright face; her leisure hours were given to the beautifying of the small home and the cultivation of her mind. She faced her lot cheerfully, with a hope in the days to come which lightened and inspirited the commonplace routine of her daily life.

CHAPTER VI.

EQUINE AND SISTERLY DISCIPLINE.

A FEW days after the Missionary Meeting, the duties of the circuit again called Mr. Crawford from home. The steady old mare Maggie waited at the door, with a compact travelling valise strapped behind the saddle. Nannie, the one servant, was in the hall, giving the last touch to the brushing of her master's long riding-cloak. Eleanor was receiving her father's good-bye kiss and cautions as to going out in the showery, uncertain weather; then, after a little hesitating pause, looking wistfully into her face, he said, "Dear, if you could bring yourself to go to

class-meeting this week, I think it would be best."

This was the institution of the "Society" of all others most distasteful to Eleanor, but she could not resist the pleading, deprecating tone of her father's suggestion, and she answered, "I will go there this once, father, and tell you faithfully whether I feel that I ought to do so again. I know you would not have me go to any service for form's sake only."

"No, no, dear, surely; but, you see, there is a watch kept on the preacher's family, and a particular notice taken of

their conformity to the rules of the society, and it is well to be at peace with those who are so near to our daily path."

And with a loving kiss and a little tap on Eleanor's shoulder, the preacher mounted his faithful quadruped and jogged leisurely down the street. The mare knew well the work that lay before her, and set her pace to such measure as would take her over the many miles of the circuit's round with the least inconvenience to herself. There were bright points of good feed and stabling in the prospect, and she settled to her work solidly and circumspectly. She had carried her present master many a year, the one fault of her else perfect disposition being a constant hankering after the side of the road.

In the preacher's long lonely rides, the habit of reverie had grown upon him, and the mare's gentle amble was not apt to disturb his inward communings. The hawthorn hedges, tender and toothsome in spring, afforded many a refreshing mouthful to the wise animal before her master was roused to a sense of undue pressure between the thorny hedge and the saddle. Then, too, the boundary of the road was not always a flowery hedge. Often it was a deep dike, or a shallow stream where the flax was going through its unsavory process of decay, and of late Mr. Crawford had felt he must bestir himself to reclaim Maggie's erratic propensity, feeling that his own want of watchful discipline was to blame. The good man would on such occasions vent a little of the carnal impatience long since banished from his intercourse with his fellow-men by his meek, apostolic rule of life. It would have moved the gravest lis-

tener with a sense of the ludicrous and incongruous to hear the mild and gentle old man's voice raised in sonorous reproach to Maggie when she had fairly crowded him against the edge of the road.

"Ha, you jade! into the ditch again, will you? Come back to the road, you backsliding Behemoth! you ill-disciplined quadruped obliquity! Out of the hedge, I say, or you shall surely smart with a taste of righteous wrath!"

At this climax of objurgation Maggie gave ear and hearkened: she was not unaware of a spur in dangerous proximity, and she sidled back to the highway with an air of virtuous determination which seemed unassailable by even the floweriest of hawthorns, holding on her course so straight that in a little while she had lulled her master into dream-land, when another lapse to the roadside, another rousing of the preacher's consciousness, entailed a repetition of the whole performance.

On the Wednesday afternoon, when the members in full standing met, according to their wont, in class, Eleanor prepared to fulfil her promise to her father very reluctantly, and with a sense of apparent hypocrisy which brought a tinge of shame to her cheek. The lion-headed brass knocker sounded a rat-tat of humble and subdued but persistent claim for admission. Nannie opened, and ushered in Mrs. Quigley and Miss Riley, who sent a message to Eleanor that they had called to accompany her to class-meeting.

"'Tis the little ould maid," said Nannie, when she had gone up to Eleanor, "and the red-faced widdy." (Nannie's long habit of criticising her master's hearers was too confirmed to be broken up now.) "They're come to 'scort you to cla-as-meetin', miss dear,

as if ye couldn't find the way yourself! Ah! put on yer new bonnet, dear; 'twill take the shine out o' their ould wisps."

Eleanor laughed—how could she resist Nannie's tongue?—and went down and received her volunteer escort as cordially as her feelings for them allowed, and after a short and pious exhortation from the two friends she left the house with them.

Nannie stood at the door, looking after, her keen brown eyes glancing sharply, her head set on one side, her small figure poised as if she were going to hop after them like the robin she so much resembled. "The little one's for all the world like a piece o' whinstone with the sticky whins round it, and the big one might be own cousin to Jeremiah or the mother-in-law o' mournin' Job himself, she's that dismal-lookin'," was Nannie's comprehensive commentary on the two friends. "The Lord keep that innocent darlin' from their clutches. They'll pluck her as bare as a Michaelmas goose!"

Nannie, having given this relief to her feelings, slammed the door and retreated to her kitchen, where, with her round little arms bared, she betook herself to the making of her unequalled potato-cakes. With a flat wooden slab, whereto a bridge-like handle was fastened, called a *bruiser*, she attacked the white peeled potatoes smoking on the bake-board, keeping time with the rub-dub-dub of the bruiser to the hymn "A charge to keep I have;" for Nannie was a stanch, if not a meek, Methodist, and had many comforting and tuneful hymns at call wherewithal to lighten and speed her work.

Nannie was the orphan child of a servant of Eleanor's grandmother. Mrs. Moore had taken her from her dy-

ing mother's arms and carefully reared her till she was fourteen, then sent her to her daughter, Mrs. Crawford, to be the nurse of little Eleanor, just born. No ties of relationship interfered with Nannie's utter devotion to Mrs. Crawford and her baby, while she looked up to "the master" as to a superior being. Through the trouble and sickness which ended in the death of the three elder children, Nannie's devotion and unselfishness had been the mainstay of the family; and Mrs. Crawford knew that while Nannie lived Eleanor would have a friend of unalterable fidelity. Nannie was very small, but she had a perfectly healthy body, with an immense capacity for work. She was shrewd and clear-sighted in all matters of marketing and bargaining, and had a keen insight into character.

Since the return of Mr. Crawford to his wife's birthplace, which was also hers, Nannie had contrived to make two or three visits to the old homestead. It was now, as we have said, in the sole (and, as Nannie believed, unrighteous) possession of Mrs. David Moore, the widow of Mrs. Crawford's eldest brother; and for this "interloper," as she called her, Nannie had conceived a deep dislike and distrust.

The visit which Eleanor received from Mrs. Quigley and Miss Riley was the result of a serious talk which these ladies had held after the supper-party at Mrs. Wright's. They had agreed that Eleanor's attitude toward the "Society," its services and interests, was of a lukewarm character, most unbecoming in any member, much more so in the daughter of the minister.

"Sister Riley," said Mrs. Quigley, solemnly, "it is our plain duty to our minister, as well as to our own souls, to take this motherless girl's eternal wel-

fare in hand. Now, have you seen her at class-meeting since Mrs. Crawford died?"

"No, Sister Quigley—I grieve to say no," piped Miss Riley's thin treble.

"Ah! I fear this careless sister's soul will be required of us unless we stir her up to seek after the one thing needful."

"Sister Riley, do be more guarded in your quotations from the Word. Have you not heard that this 'one thing needful' was most probably the one form of food considered as necessary by the Master, and for the useless and troublesome multiplying of which Martha was rebuked?"

"Oh, dear! that is indeed a new idea to me, Sister Quigley, and I will reflect upon it. But, to return to our young sister, who, it is to be feared, is puffed up with vain and worldly pride. I cannot see that she is remarkable for any great beauty; but doubtless she has been deluded with the belief that she is handsome—a fatal snare which Satan spreads for souls."

"Yours, dear sister, is blessedly safe from any snare of that kind," returned Mrs. Quigley, and poor little Miss Riley winced while she received the smarting cut. "However," Mrs. Quigley continued, "it will be well that we both call on Miss Crawford, and invite her to go with us next class-day. She will not venture to draw back from her duty while we are with her."

Eleanor's promise to her father was the real reason of her compliance with the zealous ladies' request. She walked with them to the chapel, thinking within herself that their conversation and aspect did not present the coming service in a more attractive light.

To those who are not acquainted with this peculiar religious communion

of the Methodists as it existed in Ireland at the time of which we write, a few words will serve to describe it. Full membership in the class presupposed a decided conversion and full assurance and enjoyment of "grace," and the certainty of "salvation." There is a leader, who, after the opening hymn and prayer, makes a report of his own spiritual progress, trials, backslidings, temptations, and triumphs. The members in turn follow with the same mental dissection. All are expected to speak; though neophytes, or those whose calling and election are not felt to be quite sure, are welcome to a silent participation in the meeting.

Eleanor sat at the end of the long form where her two spiritual guides had settled; she was close to one of the tall bare windows. The light was fading, the evening gray and sad; a solemn wind was sighing through the ancient sycamores outside, and sent their branches waving, like grim shadowy arms, against the panes. A sudden drift of rain beat on the glass, and mingled with the monotonous voice of the class-leader, who mourned his shortcomings and the assaults of Satan on his weak soul. Now and then, a sympathizing sister filled the pauses with a fervent groan; then one member after another rose and gave the history of his or her morbid self-examinations, which were impassioned and fervid, maudlin and selfish, or full of vague hopes and expectations, as each individuality gave its distinctive coloring to the confession.

Eleanor had silently resisted various promptings of her neighbors as to the necessity of giving *her* testimony, and sat wondering at the strange form which this ordination of Wesley was assuming. He had, without doubt, conceived

of this discipline of his declared followers as being of supreme use in bringing them into close mutual dependence, for spiritual fellowship and Christian communion. As Eleanor saw it now, it seemed only a violation of the most sacred emotions of the spirit, an unseemly degradation of the communings of the heart with the Almighty. "Oh!" she thought, "is this the meaning they take from life—this poor maundering over imaginary sins and conflicts with Satan? Are there not enough real sorrows and sufferers to be healed by unselfish love and living goodness? This was not the religion that filled my darling mother's heart with the joy of faith in a future of light and progress. The unwholesome exhalations of their slavish worship darken the blessed sunlight of God's love. The very children, as I too bitterly remember, are taught to tremble at the nightmare of a fearsome grave, and a devil waiting to consume them in the tortures of a material hell. Even the merciful Christ is represented as forever bleeding and agonizing under the wounds which our sins inflict. Was that the object of his divine life, his godlike warfare against cowardice and selfishness, his deeds of constant love and pity? I should stifle in this horrible atmosphere. Poor, poor people, who wrap yourselves in the cerements of fear and selfishness; who shut out from your lives the glory and the beauty which the Lord of life opens all around! No, father dear, I will have to tell you that it is not possible for me to come here—never, never will I seem to belong to this false and unnatural religion!"

The cavernous gloom of the old meeting-house deepened as the last hymn was droned out, and the last

prayer closed by a succession of variously toned "Amens." Old Davy lit a feeble glimmer in a few of the darkest corners. The members greeted each other. Mrs. Quigley and Miss Riley let Eleanor part from their company, having found some congenial spirits with whom they could deplore her lost state. As Eleanor came out of the chapel she saw a gentleman, who, as soon as he perceived her, approached with a deep salutation, and she recognized Mr. Rohan.

The sudden shower had cleared the sky; soft little stars peeped out; the air was sweet with the fragrance of garden and hedge-row. The admiring light in Rohan's eyes was bent on her, and sent a warm glow to her young heart. It was like stepping from a tomb into sunny air. No wonder her greeting was cordial and gentle—much more than she was conscious of making it—and Rohan, delighted with his reception, walked beside her as she descended the steep, narrow street. "I have just been at your house, Miss Crawford," he said. "Your servant said neither you nor your father were at home; but as I told her I had a special message for you, she said I would be most likely to find you here."

Eleanor regretted that Mr. Rohan had called when her father was away: "He expected to see you, and will return next week. I hope you will not be gone from Erna then."

"If I am obliged to leave, as I fear I shall be, I will certainly return, Miss Crawford, if I can hope to see you and your father again. Meantime my message is to you. Mrs. North has arranged the boating party for Saturday, and has sent me to claim your promise to join it. We shall visit some of the

lovely islets of Lough Erne, and perhaps see some of the ancient ruins."

Eleanor, assured of her father's consent to a day of such pleasure as this promised to be, sent a message of

thanks and compliance to Mrs. North. Rohan added that the carriage would take up Eleanor at an early hour on Saturday; and, with a wish for a cloudless day, they said good-night.

CHAPTER VII.

A DAY ON LOUGH ERNE.

It was a cloudless day—the Saturday chosen for the boating party, such a one as a friend once said she would cross the Atlantic to live through its brief hours again; and a voyage of sea-sickness and discomfort had preceded that morning's enjoyment. It was cloudless, in so far that no heavy masses of threatening gray or black filled the sky; but the heavens over Ireland are rarely without floating vapors to catch all tints and reflections of light. Soft pearl and violet, silver white and royal purple, rise and sail over lake and moor, meadow and mountain. The sunlight falls through their softening medium in caressing, animating warmth—no scorching heat, to make the day spent in the open air an exhausting labor with a weary longing at its end for rest and shade. A perfectly fine day in an Irish spring or summer means an existence amidst balm and perfume, sight and hearing enchanted with softest atmospheric tints and the hundred-voiced chorus of birds, while the mind loses all sense of present care and hard reality in the wild haunts of old romance and poetry through which every ruined wall and mossy bank, every mountain and ivy-grown castle, leads the happy idler

who can go a-pleasuring in the loveliest day of an Irish spring.

Eleanor's Saturday duties at Miss Henley's school were easily remitted, and she prepared for her excursion free from the least feeling of reproach for work neglected or postponed. Nannie hopped about, full of delight and pride in "the child," which she felt her to be more than a mistress. Eleanor's black dress left no room for finery; but for the utmost daintiness in gloves and boots and soft white crêpe about neck and wrists Nannie considered herself responsible. When the busy handmaid ran down to open the door as Mrs. North's carriage drove up, her vanity was at its height and her triumph complete, for Miss Riley was passing by to early meeting, and saw it all. Mrs. North entered the little plain parlor to wait for Eleanor. Nothing in its furniture showed pretense to more than comfort; but the books and piano, and some good engravings and slight sketches, with many small evidences of womanly handicraft, spoke of occupants of fine tastes and mental culture. Mrs. North was a little ashamed of her neglect of the courtesy which she would instantly have extended to a new-comer of *quite* her

own rank; and as Eleanor entered the room her visitor met her with all the cordiality she could infuse into her naturally winning manner. The social life of Ireland, of all other countries, has the most fine-drawn and numerous class-distinctions; and between a wealthy country gentleman's wife and a governess there was a wide distance, with many intermediate steps. Too independent and too self-respecting to be intimidated by difference of rank, but too unaffected to wish to ignore it, Eleanor met Mrs. North's friendly warmth with natural youthful pleasure. As they proceeded to the carriage, Mrs. North, presenting her children to Eleanor, said,

"I hope my boy and girl being with us won't lessen your enjoyment, Miss Crawford. As the party was half planned for them at first, I thought it would not be fair to leave them behind when we elders decided to join it. The gentlemen have gone before on the 'outside car' to have the boats quite ready."

Georgy and Fred were impatient to be off, and the carriage moved down the quiet little street with what Nannie called a grand rattle. Eleanor turned to give her a smiling good-bye, and Nannie shut the door, comforted for her day of loneliness by the thought that her darling was at last in her proper sphere—"among the quality."

The discovery which Mrs. North had made that the lady with whom Eleanor had been living was the sister-in-law of her nephew's father gave them a topic of common interest to talk about. "Lady Stanley was a dear friend of your mother when she was young, I believe," Mrs. North said. Eleanor assented, and spoke with ten-

der feeling of the happiness of her two years' stay in Lady Stanley's family: "While I had the dearest little children for my pupils, I had the good-fortune to share the lessons of Miss Stanley and her sister. To them and to the masters who came to teach them I owe the best part of my education. If, when my father ceases to travel as a preacher, we could find a home near Briar Mount, where, without leaving him, I could again teach the little girls, it would make me very happy."

The carriage was now past the town, and a mile farther on stopped at the head of a narrow, grassy lane, where Frank Stanley and Mr. Rohan were waiting for the rest of their party. They left the easy conveyance, and with it all conventional forms and stiffness, and Fred and Georgy had hardly lighter hearts or more vigorous capacity for enjoyment than the elders. Mrs. North and Eleanor, Rohan, Frank, and two lads of his own age, with Mr. North and Miss Irwin, completed the party. The latter waited now by the boat, and had sole charge of baskets and cushions, wraps and umbrellas, without which it would be unheard-of temerity to attempt an excursion in Ireland, even in the face of the most smiling sky. The two boats, which were waiting with strong young fishermen for rowers, held the party without inconvenient crowding. They shoved off together, and kept within speaking distance almost the whole day.

Lough Erne was at its loveliest then. At a short distance from where the boats had started it widened out to a broad, smooth expanse, all dotted with tiny islands, thickly set with plummy trees. It was as if Nature in some holiday freak had pulled a forest in

bits, and scattered them over the lake. On some of these islets were groups of fisher huts; on others long-stretching farm-houses; here and there a trace of an ancient castle or monastery. The two boats made directly for the "Holy Island," where many devout Catholics even now would consider it a precious boon to be laid for their last sleep. An ancient ruin of an abbey, a holy well, and stone coffin, and, most important of all, an almost perfect round tower—one of those mysterious structures whose origin or use is still a matter of dispute—were on the island. A broken and precarious flight of stone steps led from the abbey floor to the frame of a window; and there the ivy grew so thick that Eleanor and the two children, stepping through the broken wall, sat down as on a bank of moss.

At the stone coffin the rowers were tempting each other to a trial of its fabled power; for a legend said that over the form which fitted perfectly in the hollowed stone the huge mass would turn, forming both coffin and tomb. The holy well, where once the abbess and her nuns had found the blessed water, was only a square dry stone marked with the cross, and with a round basin in the middle. Heaps of masonry had fallen all around from the ruined walls, and gradually risen, with year after year of mossy growth, into hillocks where mild-eyed cows grazed peacefully. Yet a sort of saintliness pervaded the little island in all its decay, the sweetness and purity with which Nature sanctifies her poorest domains, hiding the wounds of time and the failure of man's devices and vain efforts at perpetuity with springing grass and trailing moss and star-flowered brier and bramble.

Ely Lodge, a nobleman's residence, which occupied one of the larger islets, and was one of the most beautiful in the whole country, was their next halt. Here the lunch, that indispensable element of a picnic-party, was to be spread; and the agent of the estate, knowing that Mr. North had planned this visit, had taken care that everything should be done to make it a pleasant one. A beautiful slope of lawn shaded by great spreading oaks was chosen for their *al fresco* dining-room. The children had the delight of helping to unpack the baskets, while the others visited the stately, luxurious dwelling which wealth and taste had filled with all that is delightful to look on and live among. As a matter of course, the family were absent, but the house-keeper was a zealous guide to the picture-gallery, the conservatories, and the dairy. It was, as Eleanor felt, too perfect, too luxurious. The wild and simple beauties of the other islands had more charm, and she was glad to go with blue-eyed, pleasure-loving Georgy and her brother, a tall, shy boy of thirteen, to ask for leave to cross to the nearest shore and climb a great heather-covered hill. Mrs. North and Miss Irwin had found a soft seat in a sleep-inducing nook: "If Miss Crawford would kindly see that Georgy did not splash into the water or Fred fall from the hill-top, they were welcome to go;" and so Eleanor, with Frank and the two college youths, took the young Norths and descended the path to the little wharf where the Ely Lodge boats lay.

Mr. Rohan had all the day refrained from any marks of particular attention to Eleanor; but he watched every movement and listened to every word. Now, as he saw her face flush and

brighten with pleasure, her step, light and elastic, keeping pace with the girl and boy who already felt her to be an understanding and worthy companion in their love of wild nature, he could hardly restrain himself from following them. But Mrs. North evidently had no idea of dispensing with his attendance. Her husband had gone with the steward to see some new horses in the marquis's stables, and the two ladies would be alone unless he stayed; but the proverbial self-reward of virtue and patience was not denied to Rohan: just as he saw the boat drawn up for the young group to step in, Mr. North reappeared and asked where the children had gone.

"Across to climb the heather," said Mrs. North, in a drowsy voice.

"Have they taken a wrap or an umbrella?"

"No," said Miss Irwin; "why should they? They will be only an hour away."

"Yes, and in half an hour they may get a thorough drenching," said their careful and rather fussy papa. "Rohan, like a good fellow, run after with this water-proof; I can stay by the ladies till you come back."

Rohan did not take the time for a reply, but went down the path at such a pace that by a last long stride, and almost a leap, he reached the boat as it shoved off: "Frank, take an oar, and we can send the boatman back, else I shall be one too many."

Frank took the oar, though not with the same alacrity as Rohan, and they reached the opposite shore in a few minutes. The climb up the hill—the children considered it quite worthy to be called a mountain—was to Eleanor the greatest enjoyment of the day. The wild, sweet heather contrasting its

purple with the gold of the furze (the whin-bush, as the North-country people call it); the little streamlets straying in the most unexpected places; bushes of the blueberry, whose dark fruit would not be ripe till late summer; ferns hidden in shady hollows, where the small streams fed their growth; everywhere untouched, unspoiled, if "unimproved" nature. Something in the girl's soul delighted in what was free, wild, and unconventional. Perhaps the restraint in which her early years had been passed fostered and strengthened this love of liberty. But she could never bear a bird in a cage to be in her home, nor hear a child's petition for a holiday, without suffering a pang if compelled to say "no."

Far up on the hill they reached a cabin where lived a shepherd to tend the flocks of sheep, which dotted the heather with white points for acres many and wide all around, and at the cabin door a group of rosy, ragged children gathered to see the wonderful vision of so many fine people. Georgy rushed to empty her pocket of nuts and raisins and "sweeties" for the little peasants—a dispensation which took away the last doubt in their young minds of her being a "raal angel." The mother came out, holding a chair which, with a "flip" of her apron, she dusted and placed for Eleanor at the door.

"'Tis too poor a place to ask you to come in, my lady," she said, with a smile and a courtesy, "but if the young ladies and the young gentlemen would take a noggin o' milk, 'tis proud I'd be to bring it."

The strangers did not at all disdain a drink of the fresh pure milk, and even a piece of oaten bread was ac-

ceptable to the children after their climb.

Rohan had not let his opportunity of closer acquaintance with Eleanor go unimproved. By the most respectful but marked devotion of manner, he showed her how more than happy he was to wait on every step, and anticipate every movement; and he could have found her in no better mood in which to advance his interest in her regard and her pleasure in being so waited on. It was a new experience to her. All her life she had been so far removed from the admiration of men—such at least as could at all approach to any level of sympathy with her nature—that this first incense was undeniably sweet and grateful.

Seeing her so freshly pleased with the lough and its beautiful islands, its shores, and the hills framing it round, he set himself to tell her every wild legend and bit of fairy lore belonging to it that he could remember to have ever heard. On their way down the hill, he kept close to her, and drew her to talk of her books, her tastes, her father, and her past life, as she could hardly have believed possible with one so little while ago a stranger. When they had returned to Ely Island, Mrs. North looked at her a little keenly as she came, holding Georgy by the hand. Something new was in Eleanor's face, a deeper tint on her cheeks, a happier gleam in her clear, honest eyes.

"I have had a charming reverie since you were gone, dear children; it seems but a short time."

"Oh, mamma, you look as if you had had a great big sleep!" said blunt Georgy; "and Miss Irwin is hardly awake yet, I declare"—for that lady was rubbing her eyes as if she, too, had been deep in "reverie."

"Well, it must be quite time we were going home," said Mrs. North. "Fred, call papa. I suppose he is gone to take another look at the horses."

The party got together as quickly as might be; the boats were filled; and in the lengthening twilight they rowed softly on the smooth, clear water, where by-and-by the children began to count the star images. Eleanor, as she felt the boat grate on the pebbles of the shore, knew that her long day of enjoyment was over. The sleepy children could hardly find voice to say good-night. Mrs. North announced her intention of coming very soon to call on her and her good father. Mr. Rohan had left the other gentlemen that he might be ready to assist her from the carriage, and wait till Nannie had opened the door; then, for the first time, he held her hand in his own, and though he dared not press it, there was a caress in the tone of his voice as he bade her good-night and good-bye. If there had been nothing to mark the day for Eleanor besides, one sense had been aroused in her, making it forever memorable—the first dawn of the exquisite pleasure to a woman's heart of knowing that she may be beloved.





CHAPTER VIII.

ROHAN'S ESTATE.

IN the counties lying nearly in the centre of Ireland, where the province of Leinster borders on Connaught, there is still another variety to be observed in the characteristics of the people. The difference of speech is more in the cadence of the voice than the pronouncing of the words. There is neither the rough North-country brogue of Ulster, nor the soft, thick utterance of Munster. The people are of a more Saxon type, a more slender form; there is a preponderance of light over dark complexions, with a suave and insinuating manner. The face of the country also differs from the extreme North and South. There are numerous flat stretches of bog-land, many loughs, or lakes, and rivers. The Shannon, the most important of these last, flows through a long extent of country, often overflowing its banks and the low bottom or meadow lands. Toward the west the ground becomes higher and more irregular; the Sligo Mountains break the horizon with their picturesque outline. Fine ruins of castle and tower and abbey rise in rich pasture-lands or on islands in the lakes. The tourist will pass by, now a lordly castle, now a bishop's palace, a glebe or rectory, where a charming dwelling is nestled in a bower of trees, with

rose-garden and ferneries that praise both the climate and the cultivation.

In one of these counties lay the parish of Monhill and the manor of Annadale, the inheritance and sole property of Gerald Rohan, Esquire.

It was originally part of an immense estate belonging to a noble earl, which had been allotted as the dower of a daughter of the house upon her marriage with Eugene de Rohan, descendant of a family of noble Huguenot refugees. His ancestry made the union equal in point of birth, but it was the bride alone who possessed money. The Lady Anna's father had built the Annadale House after the taste of its future mistress; and if its architecture presented some anomalies, all requisitions of comfort and elegance were fulfilled. It resembled somewhat the old Italian villa construction, with a handsome portico and a flat roof. This was rather strikingly adorned by marble statues of Apollo with his lute, Diana, huntress, Mercury of the winged heels, Pallas, and others of the "Olympian brood." The otherwise modest proportions and pretensions of the house made these artistic ornaments seem sufficiently incongruous; but as the white figures rose above the tall trees, they gave the effect of a more ro-

mantic atmosphere and more Southern clime than the outer air and surroundings of the estate confirmed. The rooms were few, but lofty and spacious; tall, wide windows opened on a smooth terrace on three sides of the house; on the fourth was the main entrance and portico, whence broad gravelled walks stretched to the avenue, the miniature park, and sunny gardens. A brook went gurgling and rejoicing beside the avenue of oak and chestnut and glossy ilex, till near the entrance it ran under a tiny rustic bridge and broadened to a lakelet, where white majestic swans sailed up and down, with their plummy wings raised as if to form a living boat wherein they might tempt the fairies to come and sail.

Several generations of De Rohans (or Rohan, as the name gradually had subsided into) had lived and died here; the race had not improved or flourished with the trees and the grass. Unwise management and reckless lives had diminished the rent-roll and deteriorated the Rohans. The daughters of the last two generations had wedded and gone to far-distant homes, and of the four sons of Gerald's grandfather not one had lived to "make a gray head." Two in the army and one in the navy had fallen in the Peninsular campaign and in an engagement at sea where Nelson was the hero. The heir had never been farther from home than England, where, on a visit to a relative, he had met his future wife. The handsome, gallant Irish squire had made a speedy conquest of the heart of the young English girl (many years younger than he), who bloomed as innocent and ignorant of the world as one of her own white roses. After her marriage to Mr. Rohan, she set forth on her wedding-tour to Ireland, knowing as little

of that country, separated only by a narrow channel from her own and governed by the same crown, as if it had been Siam or Tasmania. Of a loving nature, generous and sympathetic to a fault, she believed that the country of her adored husband must be all that was lovely.

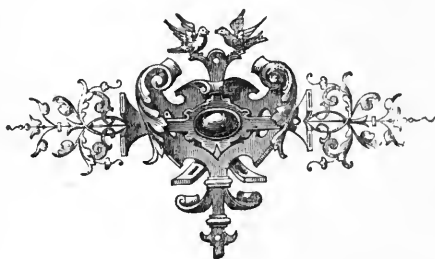
Annadale, though then not in its best days or at its highest beauty, took her heart by storm—wild and sweet and romantic, its very neglect a charm, contrasted with her conventional English home. Then came the inevitable shock of the discovery of the wild lives of the gentlemen who were her husband's associates, and the proof that his life was no exception to the rest. The mismanagement of the property, the poverty and ignorance of the peasantry, the idleness and thriftlessness of most of the tenants, distressed and grieved her. When afterward she became more used to the outer aspect of the people, and, going into their cottages and cabins, saw the warm, impulsive, childlike side of the Irish character, she began to understand and love them; and truly this love and sympathy touched her poor people as with a magic wand, to call forth all their best emotions. They revered her, and returned deep gratitude for her goodness; nay, even forgot that she was the daughter of the Sassenach, and remembered only that she was their landlord's wife. Mrs. Rohan's homesickness disappeared: her visits to England, involving at that time a tedious and fatiguing journey, were discontinued; and when her son was born she never thought of Ireland except as her true home and country, ordering her life so as most perfectly to fulfil the duties of a wise and kind lady of the manor.

Had her husband lived, her influence

and her patient, gentle nature must have won him to a nobler and wiser life; but when Gerald was still a child, the squire was carried home from the hunting-field, not dead, but so hurt by the fall from his horse that the illness which ensued in a few weeks ended his life. If to Mrs. Rohan's clear intellect and judgment her boy's guardianship had been confided, it might have been better for Gerald's future; but his guardian was a distant relative in England, who placed him at school at an early age. In the intervals of homecoming and of the foreign travel in which his mother accompanied him, her society did much to refine and elevate her son's character; and if, after his coming of age, her counsels had been long spared to aid him in the management of the estate, it would have resulted in a different condition both of landlord and tenants. But a low fever caught in the cabin of a laborer ended his mother's life a few years after Gerald Rohan had attained majority. His grief was deep and overwhelming. He found himself singularly alone, none of his immediate relatives surviving, and his distant connections and friends being nearly all in England. The rent-roll of Annadale,

diminished from its original ten thousand pounds a year to little more than a third of that sum, did not allow him to associate as he would have been satisfied to do with his equals in rank. He led a solitary life while at home, making frequent visits to friends in distant counties. Among these, Mr. North's hospitable home was always a pleasant resort to him, and that gentleman welcomed him as well for his own as for his father's sake, who had been a college friend in youth.

Among his own tenants young Rohan was by turns popular and in disfavor. The underlings of the estate flattered and deceived him; from the tenants he received the sort of affection and pride in his fine bearing and his position which it is natural for the Irish peasantry to yield their master when he is the son of the soil; but Rohan's treatment of them could not be more injudicious than he contrived to make it. By turns he was weakly indulgent or domineering, and the ill-disposed were not slow to take advantage of one mood and secretly resent the other; for who so apt at a keen perception of a master's temper and disposition as an Irish peasant?





CHAPTER IX.

RATHLINN FARM.

IN the first weeks of loneliness after his mother's loss, Gerald Rohan made prolonged and distant excursions among the hills and streams. One brook, he knew, would never fail to yield him a day's successful fishing in the season. It ran through a farm of which the tenant was one of the best on the estate; for, whether the crops had failed or prospered, Brian M'Manus might be safely depended on to appear on rent-day prepared to pay to the last penny. In his house the young squire was sure of a "soft seat and a warm welcome," for M'Manus had the true spirit of allegiance to his landlords. His forefathers had held the farm before the Rohans had been known in the land. In all the terrible political troubles they had kept their course steadily and soberly, although their sympathies must have leaned to the rebelling party, for they were Roman Catholics, and had as such felt the grievous wrongs inflicted on all who clung to that creed.

Brian M'Manus was an elderly man when Gerald Rohan came of age. His wife Norah and he, over twenty years before, when they stood before the priest to be married, were worthy examples of the better class of Irish small farmers. Handsome and merry, chaste in life, and honest and loving in heart and soul, their class has been the

very life of Ireland's peasantry, whether their faith were of the ancient church or the Protestant form.

The old homestead in which they took up their married life, and where their many children were born, deserves some word of description. The house was of stone covered with "rough-cast" whitewash, of one story, and with here and there a "wing" or a "lean to" built on. The high-pitched roof was covered with thatch, never allowed to fall to decay, but with many patches of rich old brown, where stone-crop and fragrant wall-flowers found a congenial soil. The deep eaves were colonized by many tribes of swallows; the high chimneys were never without a puff of blue smoke, which told of the ever-ready turf fire and hearty meal in preparation. The front door opened directly into the large house-place, or family room, which was kitchen, dairy (or churning-place, at least), spinning, and eating room by turns. On one side was a great dresser, where blue delft and bronze-glazed earthen-ware were set out in brave array. Vessels of pewter, kept nearly as shining as silver, wooden noggins, and the still more ancient *quaghs* (drinking-vessels) of carved wood stood on the lowest shelf, while the delft and glazed ware occupied higher and safer places. Pictures of

Holy Mother and Child, saints, and angels hung on the walls—simple and rude enough specimens of art. A venerable clock of dark mahogany ticked in the corner a lazy, solemn tick, assuring ephemeral human beings that Time and his flight were of trivial import to its persistent fulfilment of duty; in its polished case, little children, playing at hide-and-seek, found a roomy and secure retreat; its ponderous weights dropped sleepily down from Sunday to Saturday night, when a ceremony of winding, most imposing to the children, was performed, by the head of the house of course: no hand of less authority would have dared to touch it.

Under the roof was the garret room, where the children slept, the family

bedrooms being in the wings; and the lower corners under the roof were refuges for all manner of household utensils, worn-out or unused spinning-wheels, flax-reels, scutchers, and carders—the implements of the preparation of the flax. Chests of linen and heaps of blankets and woollen cloths, these all told of the exemption from poverty, the steadiness, and thrift which made the home of Brian M'Manus one of comfort and independence. Standing at the door, it was a pleasant outlook over flowering flax-fields, waving oats, or blossoming potatoes. The land was hilly and picturesque, with the bright stream where Rohan came to fish winding like a silver ribbon by field and heathy hill.

CHAPTER X.

TESSY M'MANUS.

TERESA M'MANUS stood at the farmhouse door on the evening of a bright June day. Her bodice of dark blue was laced over a plaid kerchief, and *that* was crossed on a neck and bosom that a countess might have envied for its perfect mould and whiteness; a short petticoat of dark brown showed her shapely foot and ankle in its neat shoe and white stocking; her arms were bare from the elbow, round and dimpled; one was raised to screen the sunlight from her eyes, the other held a great pail which she was bringing to the milking. The open door made a background of shadows which brought her figure out in strong relief; the slanting eaves, too, cast a brown shade round her head; but the sun shone

full on her hair and touched every ripple of its warm brown with dancing gold. A little shower of freckles on the cheeks, flushed with rosy health, while taking nothing from the fairness of her skin, gave piquancy to the full red mouth, and a darker light to her eyes of deep, laughing, melting, Irish blue.

Tessy (the diminutive of her name) was the eldest daughter of the farmer and Norah, now a bright, active matron of over forty years. Tessy was her help and comfort, though, like most Irish mothers of her class, her pride and glory were in her sons, the second of whom was at Maynooth, preparing to be a priest. The eldest was an under-bailiff in the employment of the

Earl of R——, in a neighboring county.

Mrs. Rohan had liked to visit Norah's well-kept dairy and poultry-yard, and had always noticed Tessy. She proposed more than once to take the girl home and give her such education as would fit her for a lady's maid—"An' spoil the colleen for an honest farmer's daughter and wife?" said Norah to herself, as she declined the lady's kind offer. And year after year Tessy gave more assistance to her mother. She was such a fine hand at the butter and the chickens, and so good to the "childer." "'Tis a quick temper the girl has, indeed," Norah would say; "but sure the kind word follows the hot one with her, and her heart's as tender as the pet lamb's. What would I do wid all that houseful o' childer widout her?"

Tessy was as religious as a nun at mass and fast and prayers; but at dance and *pattern* (patron-saint's festival), market and haymaking, she was the merriest and lightest-footed girl of the whole parish. The son of a neighbor farmer, Denis Kiernan, thought so; for, without any sort of disguise, he was in love with the girl, and courted and plagued her to give him her promise to marry him. Was it for Denis that Tessy was watching now, delaying with her milking, though she heard Cushie and Moggie lowing in the meadow at the foot of the lane?

"Won't he come, I wonder?" she said to herself. "Sure he's at that strame long enough to catch trout for a dinner for Phin MacCoul himself! Ah!"—catching her breath—"there he's comin'!" and, instantly settling her face into a look of demure unconsciousness, she turned deliberately away from the figure which she saw approaching.

It was Gerald Rohan, in a dress of easy cut and rough material which betrayed only the more the bearing of a gentleman. Basket on back and fishing-rod on shoulder, he came toward where he saw Tessy standing a moment before, but she had now put several paces between herself and Rohan, and seemed quite intent on getting to the cows. Gerald called out, as he quickened his steps, "Tessy, Tessy! wait a minute till I can leave these fish in the house. I am going to the meadow with you."

"Oh! did ye get back, Mr. Rohan?" said Tessy, turning suddenly, apparently aware of his presence only that moment. "Is it goin' to the meadow ye'd be, sir? Shure ye'll be too tired after yer fishin', an' 'twill be damp after the shower, I'm thinkin'. Ye mustn't be catchin' cold all for nothin', sir;" and she looked innocently into his face and turned away.

"For nothing!" said Gerald; "you provoking Tessy! you know very well it is not '*nothing*' for me to take a walk with you. You said this morning I might come."

"Oh! did I, sir? The saints forbid I'd break me word, thin; but I do be forgettin' things often when I have a power o' work to do."

(Oh, Tessy, you little deceitful! and you counted every hour till he came to claim that walk.)

Rohan had taken off and left his basket with Norah, and, changing his rod for a stout "blackthorn," he joined Tessy, and they stepped down the green, flowery, ferny lane together.

"Well, Tessy," he began, "what have you been doing since I went away this morning?"

"Is it doin', sir? Troth 'twould be hard to say what I've *not* been doin'!

There was the big churn to scald an' the chickens to feed, an' to-morrow's market-day. So I had to print the butter an' count the eggs, an' me mother callin' me to help her at fillin' a new tick, an' the feathers that wild an' contrary ye'd think they wor sarchin' for the ould goose's back again, or that the geese wor tryin' to witch thim off from us! An' thin the childer wor callin' 'Tessy' here an' 'Tessy' there till I was fairly moidhred wid thim; the two biggest wint off to school, and thim four young mischiefs— But shure the little things are fond o' me, an' I can't help bein' fond o' thim."

"Can't you help being fond of any one that likes you, Tessy?"

"Oh, 'twould depind a good dale on the sort o' fondness, sir. Ye see, when the childer get big they're not so coaxin' like; they're more bother than comfort thin!"

"But I don't mean the children always, Tessy. There are other people to be fond of you."

"Ah, Mr. Rohan! *now* ye're funnin' me—shure, who would *I* have to be lik-

in' me?—a foolish, little, freckled colleen, as me mother calls me!"

It was talk not much wiser than the chatter of the birds in the hawthorns, but it was as sweet to Tessy and as natural, and belonged to the June of her heart as much as the song of the thrush and the linnet to the June that embowered their nests with blossoms and warmed them with sunshine. And Gerald's pleasure in his companion's smiling eyes, her rustic talk, her innocent coquetry was all so natural to his years, and brought no unworthy passion to his heart. He could not talk to Tessy as he would to a lady in his own rank, but neither could he offend her by a word or a look unfit for a peeress's ears. He helped her over the stile, though Tessy had little need of such help, and waited in the meadow while she milked Cushie and Moggie, and then, with the pail of foaming snowy milk between them, they turned back to the farm-house and the supper of trout which Norah had ready; and Brian, home from the fields, helped Gerald to tie flies for a great day's fishing on the morrow.





CHAPTER XI.

FAIR-DAY AT CARRICK.

WHILE Rohan set off for a long day's sport at a much more distant stream than that at Rathlinn farm, Brian M'Manus and Tessy prepared for the ride to the fair at Carrick.

The farmer rode a strong cob. Tessy sat on one of the side-seats of the "car," a heavy old specimen of the outside or jaunting car. It was driven by the red-haired, freckle-faced "gorsoon" sitting in the "driver's seat," and handling the lines of the "natest"-looking of the plough-horses with much inward glorification and outward flourish of the whip. In the middle box, or "well," of the car were placed Norah's and Tessy's golden rolls and prints of butter, turkey and hen eggs, fat ducks and chickens, which the "quality" of Carrick and its neighborhood could depend on for unsurpassed excellence, and well worth the highest price. Several loads of hay and an immense crate of potatoes had been sent earlier to market, and waited M'Manus's presence to be sold. They were some of the last of the old crop, well saved through the winter for the demand at this season, which insured a good price in the scarcity preceding the new yields.

The turnpike-road from Rathlinn to Carrick was thronged with people from all sides going to the market (an im-

portant one, as Carrick was the largest town of a wide neighborhood), and farmers and farmers' wives, dealers in horses, "squireens" who went for fun more than business, and girls carrying heavy baskets on head or shoulder. Many of these stout lasses thought nothing of a walk of four or five miles, carrying a few pounds of butter or some dozens of eggs, considering themselves well paid for their long tramp by the few shillings they got in exchange, bringing them home to help pay the rent, or buying with them a flowered print for a gown, a new straw bonnet, and a pair of shoes.

In the poorer districts of Ireland the peasant-girls often prefer to "wear their shoes in their hands" (the reader will remember it is thirty-five years ago that our story begins) till, just outside the town, they put them on the members to which they belong, more indeed for show than comfort. But in these central counties no decent farmer's daughter would be seen without shoes and stockings.

The girls going to market always carried a little parcel of finery, too precious to be worn till just the moment for its proper display had come. On this road to Carrick there was one particular clump of sally-bushes (young pollard willows), which hid from the

passers-by a pool of clear still water, edged with soft close turf and moss. It was but half a mile from the town, and the country-girls left the road, and, sitting down on the grass, unrolled their long hair, and with a comb, or a piece of one, dressed the shining coils and braids with much care, pinned a gay ribbon in cap or collar, unfolded the little kerchief of bright silk or soft "rockspun" plaid, and crossed it over neck and bust. The pond was a faithful mirror, and gave back encouraging reflections to the handsome, smiling faces that bent over it, keeping its own counsel about the foolish and the vain, to whom it would be useless to tell the truth. If the walk had been long, shoes and stockings were removed, the feet dipped in the cool water, and wiped on the fine moss, which also served to dust off the shoes nicely; then up to the road again, ready for an imposing entry into the town among cars and horses, donkeys, cows, and pigs.

Tessy, sitting on her car, received and returned many a friendly greeting.

"Fine day to ye, Bridget," she called to a tall, yellow-haired woman. "What are ye bringin' to market to-day?"

"Oh, sorra much, miss! 'Tis only the shlip of a 'boneen'" (little pig) "that we've left; there's Larry draggin' it by the hay-rope. Och, 'tis the childer will miss the poor thing's lovely squeal, and the bit o' belly-bacon on a Sunday, God help the crathurs!"

"Come up beside me, Mary Sullivan, wid yer baby," called Tessy, to a pretty, slight young woman with a sad face. "What ails ye that ye look so down-hearted?"

Mary walked close to the car, but would not take the offered seat. "He's gone to the town since daylight this

mornin'. I'm in dread that he manes to 'list. Since the faver put us back with the rint, the luck's agin us. Miss Teresa, dear, 'tis yer father's the kind man, God bless him! an' if he'd find Teddy an' advise him, maybe 'twould stop him throwin' himself away for a sojer. Oh! Mary Mother, how would me an' me baby face that devil's pit of a workhouse? for if *he* wint, there's not another shelter left, sugh on it!" (This is an expression of the Connaught peasant's most intense disgust and contempt.)

"Indeed, Mary, me father 'll be glad to do that same, an' ye must keep up your heart. I heard tell that at the big estate in the County Monaghan the new agent is offerin' free passage to America, an' a trifle o' money to start wid to every one o' the tenants that wants to lave the country; an' me father says he wouldn't wonder if the great earl here would do the same, if the times get any worse. Anyway, we'll keep Teddy from takin' the Queen's shillin' this time" (the shilling given by the recruiting-sergeant, which makes the taker his recruit).

"Miss Tessy," said a squireen, in gallant array of velveteen coat, top-boots, and yellow waistcoat, as he rode up to the car, "'tis makin' the mornin' blush wid envy ye are, for ye've kept last night's stars for yer eyes, and coaxed to-morrow to lend ye its sunshine for yer face;" and Tessy laughed and flushed at the squireen's high-flown compliment as he made a low salute and trotted off.

Brian M'Manus jogged beside his neighbor Kiernan, talking of the crops, the markets, and cattle, and then he lowered his voice to speak of "the disturbed state of the country"—a phrase which meant, in Ireland, the uprising of

the tenants, the banding of secret societies, resistance to law, and many acts of foolish as well as wicked violence. Tessy's father had always set his face against such vain, mistaken efforts, always recoiling on the misguided people in stringent measures, rigor of law, and continued misunderstanding between landlord and tenant.

"Patrick Kiernan, if it was me own son that I knew would be takin' any part or lot in these Ribbonmen's doin's, I'd not try to screen him from the law. The man that works hard an' lives honestly doesn't complain o' the country often; an' it's never by shootin' a landlord from behind a hedge, or mobbin' an agent (as they did the day or two ago in the County Monaghan to the man that knew nothin' o' their quarrels, just come among thim as he was!) that the rale troubles and hardships we have will be righted."

Tessy, beside whom her father rode, heard enough of what he said to understand the drift of the discourse. Patrick Kiernan was her lover's father, and there was a suspicion afloat that Denis was either already in league with, or would soon be tempted to join, a Ribbon lodge. Patrick listened in silence till Brian had spoken, then merely remarked, "I believe ye're right, Brian."

"An' ye'll tell Denis what I say, Patrick; and say, too, a friend sends him word to mind what he's about," said M'Manus, leaning closer to his neighbor.

The town of Carrick was reached after passing a bridge which separated the counties of Leitrim and Roscommon. The streets were being filled with the motley crew of buyers and sellers, squireens and beggars, mountebanks, peddlers, and ballad-singers

which go to make up the attendance of an Irish fair or market. Booths were erected in the streets, and stands of *dulske* (the edible sea-weed), cockles, and *carregeen*, which were considered dainties in the inland counties. Horses and cars were put up at the inns. Donkeys, with their creels of vegetables piled high above the nearly hidden backs and sides of the patient animals; coops of cackling geese and hens, large crates of eggs and potatoes, took up most of the narrow sidewalk around the market-place. Buying and selling were in brisk progress, from the old woman's dozen or two of eggs and pair of chickens to large transactions in grain and cattle, eggs, butter, and various produce, bought and shipped immediately to England. Shows and booths were filled; for as soon as the business of the fair was transacted the pleasuring began.

Denis took possession of Tessy and treated her magnificently. As they sat in a booth where an exhibition was going on of a trained French poodle, a learned pig, and a talking jackdaw, Tessy said to her admirer, looking at him very directly and keenly, "I heard somethin' to-day, Denis, that I hope isn't true."

"What's that, thin, Tessy?"

"Oh! 'twas a friend told me, an' maybe I'd not be doin' right to come over it," said Tessy, experimenting on Denis's curiosity and jealousy.

"For goodness' sake, Tessy, don't be moidhring me wid yer riddles, but tell me what ye mane!"

"'Twas in regard o' the Ribbon lodge, thin," said Tessy, in a whisper. Now her only ground of suspicion or source of information was in the talk which she had half heard between her own and Denis's father, but she want-

ed to probe her lover and judge how much truth there was in the matter.

Denis's face cleared; he had dreaded some jealous rival having made false report of some innocent flirtation in another quarter, and this other and graver charge gave him little trouble.

"Well, Tessy, ye know if I did join the lodge, it would be for the good o' me people and the glory o' ould Ireland—not that I'm ownin' to the like o' that; an' ye mustn't be list'nin' to an ill word o' me. Come to meself, an' I'll tell *you* the truth anyway."

"Will ye promise me not to join a lodge, thin?"

"I will, upon me soul, Tessy, if ye'll give me *your* promise—the one I've asked ye for this many a day!"

Tessy shook her head and turned away. Denis had grown up next-door neighbor, comrade, playfellow to her, and she liked him, and wanted him to turn out a "steady boy." But her heart had never responded to his appeals for regard as a lover. She felt now the mistake which she had made in trying to bind him to herself by any promise, and carefully shunned the uncomfortable subject.

When the sight-seeing and the pur-

chasing in the shops were all done, Denis took her to the inn where her father waited for her, drinking his one glass of whiskey-and-water; for Brian was the soberest of farmers, and never waited till the close of the market brought the less abstemious countrymen together at the inn.

Denis would not return to Rathlinn unless Tessy gave him a special invitation to a seat on her car. This she could not bring herself to do; she would not encourage Denis, and the thought "If Mr. Rohan should meet us!" started up in her mind.

So Denis turned away, disappointed, and sought other company, more hurtful than Tessy's, among the ill-advised and turbulent malcontents who were trying to influence him to join them.

Tessy had every reason to be satisfied with her day's sales; the farm dainties sold well, and she had a handsome surplus in hard cash, even after liberal purchases of tea and sugar, a dress for the mother and herself, and various articles of adornment, and gifts of corn-crakes,* kisses, and gingerbread men for the little "mischiefs" at home.

* Cheap toys, which, being turned, make a noise like the birds of that name.





CHAPTER XII.

THE OLD PREACHER'S "GOOD-NIGHT."

DURING the years passed at school and in the family of Lady Stanley, Eleanor Crawford had been so completely removed from the influences which had surrounded her childhood, that, returning among the Wesleyans, she was able to regard them with eyes undimmed by custom and unbiassed by prejudice. Her father's life of simple faith and consistent and unselfish piety seemed different from that of the people among whom he ministered. The more zealous of them were already mourning at his lukewarmness in the opposition to the *bête noir* of all Protestant sects in Ireland—the Roman Catholic party; and some condemned openly his want of exactness as to the lines of division between Churchman and Methodist.

These objections arose from the half-educated members; for the Wesleyan Society was just then in its transition state, an unattractive one, whether of nations, societies, or individuals. There were no colleges or schools belonging to the Wesleyans; the large fund which had been voluntarily and most generously contributed on the completion of the Centenary of Methodism was not yet applied to the erection of the admirable institutions which now receive students and educate the ministers of Wesleyanism. The burning zeal and

the true missionary spirit of the first generation of Wesley's disciples, which, indeed, had accomplished far more than the highest efforts of mere mental capability, had already done its work and exhausted its force.

Among preachers and people now were found many who, perhaps not more uncultured than some of the first Methodists, were entirely without their intense devotion, their strong faith, and their loving spirit. These were too much inclined to mistake party spirit for zeal for Christ, the vanity of pretension to exceptional goodness for renunciation of the world, the ambition of personal display for the one simple desire to save sinners.

The intolerance, narrowness, and bigotry which the members of the "society" in Erna displayed, to Eleanor's eyes were so repelling that but for her father's sake and her mother's memory she would have turned utterly from all communion with them. It was but natural to her youth to judge of the faith by the professor, to lose sight of the vine in the redundant and withering leaves.

In honest fulfilment of her promise to her father she had diligently attended all the meetings at the old preaching-house. She had tried, too, to mix with and take interest in the social life

of his "people," but after a while she found herself turning from the well-to-do respectability of Mrs. Wright and her compeers to the lowly cabins of the humbler members of the congregation. A little shy of her at first, they soon found out her good and simple heart, while the almost inordinate admiration of beauty engrafted in the poor Irish made her attraction for them irresistible. What wonderful stories did Eleanor hear of special judgments, divine favors, and miraculous conversions! One favorite of hers was old Aunt Betty, a simple soul, with an unmeasured belief in marvels—provided they were religious marvels. One evening Eleanor had gone to sit and read to her a while; then Aunt Betty fell to talking of the Lord's gracious dealings with her and some she knew of.

"Did I never tell ye, honey jewel," she said, "how Molly Patterson got the gift o' readin'? Well, then, 'tis true, darlin'; shure I knew her bravely. She was convarted, dear, and the heart uv hur was warm wid the love o' the Lord; but, poor crathur, the Bible was just a dead book 'til her, for she couldn't read a taste; an' as she lived out at Killynoogan, 'twas but seldom she could hear the preacher uv the blessed Word. Well, darlin', wan day she was sittin' wid her wheel at the door, spinnin' away—the men wor all off in the fields, an' her ould misthress was noddin' in the room within. Molly's heart was sore, for the texts 'at she had kep' in her mind was dead-like, and wouldn't come to comfort her, and she stopped the birrin' o' her wheel a minit to wipe the big tears aff her face. There wasn't a sound but the bees hummin' about the big moss-rose that clim'ed up the house wall, an' the quiet an' the smell o' the flowers was like the presence o'

the Lord, she said. An' all at wanst the heart uv her laped up; she tuk the Bible the class-lader gev her and 'at she still kep' handy 'til her, and, layin' it on her breest, she just shlipped down on her two knees an' prayed: 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst!' Miss Crawford, dear, 'tis as thrue as 'at ye an' me's sittin' here, though ye'll maybe think it hard to b'lieve; but when Molly Patterson riz from her knees an' open't the Bible, the Word was as plain an' clear to her eyes as if she was larned at schule. An' read she could an' did ever after!"

Eleanor had not the heart to even look a doubt of Aunt Betty's miracle; indeed, she felt her eyes moisten at the poetry and simple pathos of the old woman's story. It was such unlettered faith and spiritual purity that kept her belief in the reality of Methodism alive.

Mr. Crawford rode to his meetings all through the circuit, old Meg, sure-footed and docile, if just as strongly inclined to the hedges and ditches, as ever. But lately both Eleanor and Nannie had seen a change in him which they dared not to comment upon and magnify to each other. The old preacher was slower and more stooping in his walk, more inclined to rest through the day. Nannie, of late days, had bribed old Davy to hang about when the master was leaving or returning, ready to bring Meg to the door or take her to the stable. Mr. Crawford had always groomed her himself, and he felt that he was yielding to a weak self-indulgence every time he let Davy perform the duty. However, Nannie placed the matter in such a light as reconciled her master to the innovation.

"Shure it's jist a charity, sir, dear.

Davy is thankful for the odds an' ends that's left an' the wee grain o' tay or sugar Miss Eleanor makes me send to Peggy. An' he won't take a ha'porth or have any *gra* with them, if we won't let him do an odd turn now an' again, lettin' on 'at he's o' grate use, sir, ye see."

And Nannie's strategy was successful.

The preacher who divided the duties of the circuit with Mr. Crawford readily undertook the active work of stirring up careless souls, setting revivals afoot, and preaching "awakening" sermons, leaving to his old-fashioned colleague the visiting of the country people, the help and comfort of the sick, the smoothing of family troubles, and settling of angry disputes.

The Rev. Samuel Smiley was the delight of the Erna congregation. So zealous, so powerful, so interesting too, for he was, happily for his own importance among the sisters, unmarried. He was of medium height, stout built and well-fed, a face broad and rather flabby, with bushy reddish-brown whiskers, smooth-shaven chin, and hair odorously pomatumed. His shining black clothes and vest and neck raiment verged toward a more worldly cut than the brethren ventured on generally. His appearance in our story will be so brief that he is hardly worth even so much mention, except as he had the misfortune to embody the very culmination of Eleanor's aversion to the Methodist friends. Mr. Smiley had an eye for beauty, and Eleanor's did not fail to attract him, although, as he declared, to his taste it wanted a little "rousing up" in expression.

To his modest self-estimate it was a matter of course that Miss Crawford

should find him irresistible, and he forthwith commenced a siege of amorous piety against her heart. Mr. Smiley's arrival in Erna did not take place till after the Missionary Meeting recorded in the beginning of the story. He had been visiting the American Conference, one of a delegation from the Irish Wesleyan Society. Eleanor had thus been happily spared his visits and supervision during the time of her mother's sickness and in the few months after her death, but now Mr. Smiley had returned, full of the glorification and importance of his visit and ocean voyage, fully armed for the conquest of recusant souls and susceptible feminine bosoms. His first object of attention was naturally Eleanor—so dreadfully careless about the interests of her immortal soul, so apparently needing encouragement to confide her inmost emotions to his tender keeping. Eleanor's avoidance of his attendance in her walks made her visits to the chapel still rarer, till, in her father's absence, they had almost ceased.

Twice in the earlier months of the summer Gerald Rohan had visited Mr. North, and had called repeatedly on Eleanor, or, more ostensibly, on her father, and Mr. Crawford took evident pleasure in his visits, hearing particularly from him of Mrs. Rohan's last years, her works of kindness among her poor, her efforts for their rescue from their worst hardships, ignorances, and vices.

Mrs. North, though her visit to Eleanor was repeated only twice, lost no opportunity of being friendly, and her carriage often stopped at the door of Mr. Crawford's modest dwelling with great bunches of flowers and delicate basketfuls of the finest produce of fruit and vegetable garden. Eleanor's

visits to Mrs. North were few, but frequent enough to show her willingness to accept the offered friendship and civility.

So the summer in Erna wore away. September, with its falling leaves and often gloomy, stormy skies, had come, and Mr. Crawford's strength was plainly failing. He had returned late one afternoon from a long ride, and had seemed to enjoy even more than usual the delicate meal which Eleanor and Nannie took delight in preparing for him—fragrant tea and toast, eggs and fruit, with the broiled bacon famous in North-country homes. The bright bog fire blazed in the grate; a deep, high-backed chair almost hid the old preacher's figure as he sat in it enjoying the generous glow. Eleanor had exhausted her budget of news, and the talk had come round to the subject of her relation to the Society. Her father had never been expansive on matters of spiritual import, but Eleanor wished that he should be aware of her true feelings, and she approached the subject with a little diffidence, yet resolved that she would be entirely frank.

"I have gone to the meetings as I promised I would, dear father," she said, stroking the hand which he had laid on her shoulder; "will it pain you when I say that I can find in them nothing to make me happier and better? I come away in anything but an amiable frame of mind from class-meeting and preaching and prayer-meeting. I suppose I must still be unregenerate and rebellious, for I cannot feel that every youthful desire, all gayety of heart, all delight in the beautiful things of life and of art, should be crushed down as unholy and displeasing to God. Why has he given us such feelings, or

gifted us with the genius to create and interpret beautiful ideals, divine aspirations, if he would have us despise and destroy them? Yet this was the gloomy impression left on my childish mind; this is the teaching to which I listen in the Erna preaching-house—never from your lips, dear father, nor from your dear old brethren, Mr. Mayne, Mr. Keys, Mr. Crozier, Mr. Pratt: the beauty of holiness, the love of Christ, have ever been their theme and yours. What, then, shall I do? Be insincere enough to continue among these people, or seem to be at variance with your belief and profession?"

"My dear," Mr. Crawford answered, with a weary little sigh, "it will be very unpleasant for you among the people here, I fear, if your own feelings oblige you to withdraw from the Society. But you know I have never, since you were grown up, wished to constrain you in any matter of conscience. With minds like yours and your dear mother's it is safest to forego all interference. You will find the right, and do it. To God alone are you answerable. Until the time of my retirement from the ministry comes, perhaps it will not be hard for you to conform to the rules of the Society in such a degree as to turn aside the tongues of gossips and meddlers. But if you still feel unwilling to do thus much, the small annoyance of ill-natured remarks will be a light thing to bear compared with the grievous wrong of laying a burden of insincerity on your mind."

He paused for a moment, and took Eleanor's hand in his own.

"I feel to-night, dearest child, that it is best I should speak of my departure, which may still be some time distant, but which I sometimes think may come very quickly. How welcome my

release would be but for the one thought of leaving you so lonely! If I could but have seen you the happy wife of one you could worthily love, one deserving of my darling— But my Eleanor will say with me ‘Thy will be done,’ when the summons comes to reunite me to her who was the one love of my life.”

Eleanor’s tears fell silently. She kissed her father’s forehead, his cheeks, and hands, but there was no further speech between them for the time. They sat in silent communion till Nannie came in for the evening prayer and the reading of the Word. The chapter was from the Acts—the vision of Peter, with its lesson of charity and toleration. Eleanor felt a little pang of self-reproach.

Had *she* been calling any of God’s creatures common or unclean? Nay, rather was it that she felt such faith in the infinite, all-embracing love which should erase all poor distinctions of class and sect, all lines of creed and arrogation of especial favor from the Divine Parent of humanity.

She watched her father as he went through all the little familiar routine of the evening devotions—the great old Bible so reverently closed and put aside; the spectacles taken off, folded, put in their case, and laid beside it; the passing of the gentle hand over the saintly head with its mild glory of white hair; the placid upward look—her heart melted in love to him. He smiled at her as he met her earnest gaze, and said,

“Will you sing me the hymn which you know I like so much, dear?”

Eleanor went to the piano, and played a few soft chords while she sung,

“Being of beings, God of love,
To thee our hearts we raise;

Thy all-sustaining power we prove,
And gladly sing thy praise.
Heavenward our every wish aspires
For all thy mercies’ store;
The sole return thy love requires
Is, that we ask for more.”

Her father’s voice and look were calm and cheerful as he bade Eleanor good-night. He pressed her in his arms and blessed her, and held out his hand to Nannie.

“Good, faithful little woman,” he said, “you will take care of her”—looking at Eleanor—“whatever happens.”

So they parted for the night.

Eleanor listened in her room, adjoining her father’s, to his steps, always hushed and gentle, going and coming as he prepared for rest. Then she fell asleep, with a great love for him in her heart and a close mingling of the thought of her mother with him.

In the morning, as she sat waiting for him to join her at the breakfast-table, a something eerie in the stillness overhead struck on her heart. She went to the door, listening a moment, then flew up-stairs. Nannie had just laid the master’s shoes in their speckless lustre at the door of his room. Eleanor’s white face made her start. She knocked and called “Master!” then opened the door, Eleanor clinging to her; and they stood within the room in the august presence of the majesty of death! And from it there fell on the two white, awed faces the stillness and peace which debarred even a sacred grief from entering. The old preacher lay dead. It was a sense not outward which brought the swift conviction; for as he lay, with his sweet face a little upraised, and his beautiful, saintly hands folded, nothing deeper than a gentle sleep seemed to hold him

in its soft silence. But all was over indeed. It was like the natural, easy release of old age; for though James Crawford's age was not great, his life of self-denial and labor, the loss of his wife, and the natural delicacy of his constitution reasserting itself, had wrought the same physical decay which on ruder organizations it is left for years to do.

Eleanor and Nannie sunk on their knees beside the bed. The first defined emotion of which the bereaved daughter was conscious was a great and holy joy in realizing that the two beings most dear to her were reunited; and in this she felt no separation between them and herself. The exultation of the moment overbore all personal feeling. It was only Nannie's heart-broken sobbing that recalled her to reality.

"Hush, Nannie dear! We must not trouble their meeting with our selfish grief," she whispered, rising and taking Nannie's hand. "Come!"

She left the room, white and trembling; but it was not till she was in her own chamber that full consciousness returned, and, looking round, she saw that in the little time since she had left it every smallest object of the familiar surroundings had taken on a new look, strange and still and empty, as if the soul had suddenly gone out of everything. Nay, it seemed to her that never till then had she believed altogether in the death of her mother, so soon had she made the grief of that loss subservient to the care and love of her father; but now, sinking under the wave of lonely desolation, she knew that all which had given to her life its purpose and strength was forever gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

NANNIE'S MANAGEMENT.

RECOVERED from her first bewailing for the beloved master, and the doctor whom she had brought in to confirm the assurance of death having gone, Nannie set herself to arrange all the sad details in such a way as to spare Eleanor every unnecessary pang. When Davy came at the usual morning hour, she drew him into the kitchen, and, keeping back her tears, whispered to him,

"Davy, my man, the master's gone home. The Lord saw he was fit to go. Whisht!" she said, as she saw Davy's uplifted hands and open mouth; "go you back for Peggy, an' don't breathe

wan word, good or bad, to a livin' sowl till ye bring Peggy here. I'll take good care this time that them dampires" (vampires Nannie meant) "ll not put fut in this house wit their rowlin' eyes and long faces peerin' intil everything while they're lettin' on to be that sorry."

Davy stood enough in awe of Nannie's power to keep his own counsel until he had done her behest and returned with Peggy, in clean cap and Sunday gown, as if summoned to a festival. The old couple's simple and reverent, if lowly and uncouth, hands did the last services to their minis-

ter. Then Nannie sent Davy to Mr. Smiley.

"I suppose he's the first one to be told," she said to herself; "though I can't 'bide the smirk o' the consaity crathur; an' it's him 'll have to order the ringin' o' the church bell."

In a little while Mr. Smiley hurried to the minister's house, surprised and shocked, and pouring a whole stream of questions on Nannie, to which her replies were short and crusty enough.

"Dear me, dear me!" he went on; "how sudden! how dreadful! Called without a moment's warning!—let us trust, fully prepared. Yet"—shaking his head—"I could have wished for a clearer testimony, a more decided frame of mind. Ah! my friends"—half closing his eyes—"let us watch—watch and pray, for death cometh like a thief in the night!"

"Eh! Misther Smiley, they'll be weel aff that's ca'ed if they'll be as weel preparit as yon saint o' the Loard," said Nannie, who always became more Northern in speech when excited. "Lang wull't be afore sich a praycher an' sich a mon'll be fownd i' this generation o' vipers. Th' ould stock's goin', an' time for them when the likes o' some 'at I ken's left to gang bletherin about."

"Is your mistress aware that I am here, my good woman? She will doubtless wish to see me and engage in a word of prayer."

"My mistress can weel say her prayers till hersel'—or her Maker," said Nannie, correcting herself. "She'll no be fit for seein' strāangers. If she has e'er a word to send ye about

the funeral or that, I'll get Davy to bring it till ye."

So Mr. Smiley perforce acquiesced in Nannie's arbitrary arrangements, and departed to announce the tidings in the chapel; for it was Sunday, and the people were gathering to morning service.

Eleanor, up-stairs, moved restlessly from one room to the other, setting everything in perfect order, tenderly touching and arranging the fine lawn of the pillow around her father's head, gazing through her blinding tears on the face all illumined by that wondrous halo which rays out from the first repose of death. In a few hours it must fade, and surely that is the token that no living gaze should ever more light on it, but, shrouded in eternal darkness, it should be laid away from mortal sight.

Old Peggy, in her Sunday clothes, hovered around the kitchen fire, making strong tea and manifesting a mixture of deep sorrow and godly consolations, her quotations from Scripture and hymn-book liberally, if not very applicably, bestowed. But the conclusion and summing-up of all her wisdom, sacred and profane, was the oft-repeated maxim: "Eh, sirs an' fren's! there's nothin' sartain in this onsartain world but death!"

Poor lame Davy, who had a soft and loving heart in his crooked old body, could only relieve it by giving Maggie in the stable a "sevendible" grooming, interspersed with many exhortations to a frame of mind suitable to the occasion reminding her that she would never more carry the master to his works of love and charity among the people of Erna circuit.





CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. MOORE COMES FORWARD.

IN the middle of the week many of the best as well as "highest" of the people of Erna and its neighborhood assembled to pay the last respects to Mr. Crawford. In the simple and heartful fashion of the time and place, six gentlemen carried his coffined remains on their shoulders to the chapel, where, after a brief service (which also included the most beautiful and impressive portions of the Church of England burial-service), they again lifted and bore him beyond the confines of the town; then, transferred to a hearse, the coffin was taken to Cairne—the graveyard on the hill-side, where, as we have already said, Mrs. Crawford slept among the gray, moss-grown, century-old graves of her people.

For the week after the funeral of her father Eleanor felt much as if she were the waif of a total wreck cast on a cheerless shore, Nannie the one human stay and friend left to her. None of her father's relatives were living, and of her mother's many brothers hardly a name remained in the memory of the people of Erna. Only in the old home of the Moores lived and reigned the widow of the elder son David, sole possessor of the broad fields and streams and hills which made the flourishing freehold farm of Kilrogan.

One son had been born to David

Moore—Walter, who, surviving his father, grew to be "a fine young man, an honor to the ould name," as the people said. He came home one midsummer, his college education brilliantly completed, went into the hay-field with the mowers, raked till he was tired and overheated, then laid down in the shade, caught a violent cold, which, untended by physician or skilful nurse, turned to a brain fever, and in a few days Walter Moore slept with his fathers in Cairne. His mother suffered through her pride; but her heart, if she could be said to possess such an organ, found speedy consolation. She had rude health, and a love of power which the control of her servants and the management of her farm gratified; and she rejoiced, in her dull way, in knowing that her money was entirely at her own disposal. It even acquired new zest, from the fact that it had come to her through accidental circumstances rather than by any righteous title.

Mrs. Moore had a portly presence, and a deep, rough voice. Her speech was almost Scotch, as indeed is that of all the people of the extreme North of Ireland. Little, stiff, stingy curls of gray hair hung on each side of her face, that was wrinkled and yellow now, though it had once been fresh and fair, and the curls of a fine rich

auburn. David Moore, the heir of Kilrogan, thought he had secured a prize when he wedded Sandy Aiken's daughter, who, to complete her attractions, was reputed to be an heiress; but the fortune which he expected collapsed into a fifty-pound note, which, early in the honey-moon, the father-in-law handed to the young husband. He flung the miserly gift indignantly back, but the knot was irrevocably tied; and Mrs. David held a tight grip when she had once secured a footing in the old home.

The only daughter of Kilrogan Cottage was married and away; the brothers all scattered far and wide: only the old couple left. In a few years they, too, were out of the way of the new mistress. Her husband lived but five years after the parents; and in the house where many generations of Moores had lived honorable and industrious lives there remained but this woman to bear the name—a stranger of inferior type in mind and heart. Nannie Humphreys, who was a child a few years old at the time of David Moore's marriage, had grown to a girl of fifteen in the house with the new Mrs. Moore; and when, just before her death, Ellen Crawford's mother had sent Nannie to tend the baby Eleanor, she took away with her a clear recollection, which included a deep dislike, of Mrs. David Moore.

When the news of Mr. Crawford's death had reached Kilrogan Cottage that Sunday morning, the old madam's callous heart was troubled. By this time her aims and occupations had settled into two: saving money, and securing her salvation—a very similar process, this last, to that which she would have scorned and derided as papistical and superstitious in her

humble Catholic fellow-sinners, to wit, "making her soul." As we have already hinted, she kept just on the outside of Methodist and Presbyterian restrictions; not belonging as a member to either denomination, she escaped all claims for the support of the ministers, repairs of houses of worship, missions abroad, and poor at home. Should stress of weather overtake her, surely, between such stanch crafts in the fleet of sects, she might secure a snug berth, and sail triumphantly through the gates of glory into the harbor of heaven.

But position and respectability were valuable to her; and these now demanded that, as Eleanor's sole remaining relative, she should "come forward." The Wrights of the Diamond and of the Hill, the Miss Rileys and the Widow Quigleys of the Methodist Society, as well as her more solid and less emotional Presbyterian friends, all required that she should come forward. There was no escaping it.

Accordingly, in the second week after Mr. Crawford's death, Mrs. David Moore's "car," driven by Peter, her most trusted bailiff and man of general usefulness, and a remarkably good-looking young fellow to boot, stopped before the sad and lonely little house in Erna.

Eleanor had gone to her school duties for the first time since her recent loss, and Nannie hurried to the door, sure that her mistress had returned. To her amazement, Mrs. David Moore stood before her. She had not seen her since Mrs. Crawford's death, and all Nannie's "manners" were needed to receive her old enemy with becoming civility.

"Well, Nannie! So ye're here yit?" was Mrs. Moore's salutation.

"Yes, indeed, mem; it's the fittest place for me to be, I'm thinkin'. Was it me ye'll be wantin' to see, mem?"

"What for sh'u'd I be wantin' to see ye, ye saucy quean?" said Mrs. Moore, wrathfully. "Go an' call Eleanor Crawford, an' tell her her aunt's waitin' to see her."

"Step within, mem, an' I'll tell Miss Eleanor 'at her uncle's wife kem to see her at long-last." And Nannie, with much dignity, opened the parlor door.

Mrs. Moore swept past Nannie into the little sitting-room, and Nannie, almost breathless between surprise and anger, went into her kitchen and sat down to recover her self-possession.

"What on earth is the ould miser come here for now?" she said to herself. "It 'ud be only right o' me to hinder her from seein' the darlin' child at all. I could aisy wait at the hall door an' get her up to her room before the hardened crathur could get a wink at her."

But a minute's reflection showed Nannie how unwarrantable such a proceeding would be, and she returned to the parlor door, which she opened, and addressed the waiting visitor:

"My mistress isn't at home; so, if ye plaze, ye can wait a wee." And Nannie closed the door before the visitor could reply.

"Humph!" croaked the old woman. "It well becomes her gallivantin' about the town a day or twa after her fayther's de'th!" She looked sharply about the room—"Nice godly buiks for a Methody girl—*Shakespeare* an' *Scott*, an' sich-like trash. Fillin' her min' wi' wicked, warldly notions!—no' 'at *I* iver speer intil the like. An' a pianna, na less! Hech! what did girls in my day do wi'oot sich strummin' an' skirlin', an' stuffin' their fulish

brains wi' lies? Ef I've anythin' to do wi' her, I'll tak' care—"

Her soliloquy was interrupted by a knock at the hall door, followed by Eleanor's entrance. Nannie had just time to warn her mistress, who was before her, as she opened the parlor door and confronted Mrs. Moore. The name had brought a vivid flush to Eleanor's cheek, and she stood a moment, gathering sufficient composure to meet her unexpected visitor.

Mrs. Moore rose and made a stiff courtesy, then approached, holding out her hand.

"Ye'll hardly be knowin' me, Eleanor," she said, with a grim attempt at friendliness, impressed and checked, despite her "masterfulness," by the dignified presence of the beautiful girl. "But, you know, I'm yer ain uncle's wife, an' I thought it my Christian duty to come an' see efter ye, noo yer fayther's gone."

Eleanor choked down the sob which rose at that beloved name. She *would not* bring his memory into such a presence. She said some words of quiet response, and sat down opposite to her aunt.

"As I understand, Eleanor, that ye've no one belongin' to ye nearer than mysel', ye'll see 'at it's only proper I should know what ye're minded upon doin'. Ye'll not be for stayin' here all alone, o' coorse?"

"No, I cannot do that," said Eleanor. "I went to Miss Henley to-day, hoping perhaps she would make room in her house for me and Nannie; but that I find she cannot do, and I will not be separated from Nannie."

"Your fayther gev me to understan' that Leddy Stanley 'ud be glad to hev ye back."

"All the family have gone to the

Continent for a long stay. She has written to me most kindly, and invited me to join them, but it would be only as a visitor. She had already engaged another governess; and, besides, the same objection—separation from Nannie—would prevent me from going, even if I could afford it.”

“What’ll ye do, thin, if Nannie hes to go wi’ ye wherever ye are?”

“I must look for a home in some respectable family. I shall be quite able to pay both for myself and her. Miss Henley will give me more to do, now that my time is all unoccupied at home”—a little tremor shook her voice here—“and, besides, the small annuity which my father inherited from his mother is enough, with my own work, to give me the sweet bread of independence.”

Eleanor intended that Mrs. Moore should see that she could be in no wise a claimant for her bounty; and she had also felt a certain strength returning to her, in thus speaking of her affairs even to such a listener. Among the few visitors whom she had been able to receive, there was not one to whom she could be even thus communicative; also, in giving words to her intentions, they were made to appear more settled and definite than they had yet seemed, in the sad confusion of her life since that calamity of her father’s loss.

Mrs. David was quite silent for a minute, in which Eleanor’s position presented itself to her in an entirely different light. “Able to pay!” Then why not at once offer a home to Eleanor, and gain the money which she must spend in any case? To be sure, there was Nannie; but she could knit and sew, and lately Mrs. Moore’s eyes and fingers were not as keen and swift as they once were.

Being a woman of decision, she instantly put her thought into words.

“I haven’t a vary gay house to offer to a young leddy o’ sich fine eddication as you,” she said; “but ef ye’d fancy two or three rooms in the ould hoose til yoursel’ an’ Nannie, I’ll set thim low til ye, an’ ye can tak’ yir males wi’ me.”

Eleanor was much surprised. She had no conception of the temptation which a few guineas added to the hoard can become to a miser; and, though not failing to notice the stipulation as to rent, she gave the widow credit for a better intention and a decenter sense of duty than she deserved.

“But Nannie?” she objected.

“Oh, let the wumman come,” said Mrs. David. “Ye can make her set a stitch for me now an’ thin, an’ do odd turns at knittin’ an’ that like. Martha ’ll not stan’ any interfarin’ in her kitchen, but there’ll be room enough for thim to keep the pace between thim.”

“If you will allow me to think over your proposal for two or three days,” said Eleanor, “I will decide, and let you know.”

“Oh, tak’ yer time, sartainly, an come out to Kilrogan when yer min’ ’s made up. Only mind, Eleanor, any little matter o’ rent, or that like, must be jist between you an’ me. I’ll have nothin’ said in the town about it? An’, as far as gettin’ in an’ out to yer tachin’ goes, sure ye can have the car in bad weather, an’ the walk’s good for ye when it’s fine. A trifle o’ money over and above the rent ’ll make it right with Peter.”—“’Twill save me raisin’ the boy’s wages anyhow,” she said, in her penurious, grasping heart.

As Mrs. Moore rose to go, she made

an effort to recall some of the cheap commonplaces of her religious phraseology, but somehow she relinquished the intention. Her tardily acknowledged relative did not seem likely to receive such consolations thankfully, or value them highly. Eleanor's reserve and self-command struck them dumb on the good woman's lips.

Nannie opened the door for the visitor, closed it behind her with a defiant sniff, and came to Eleanor's side as she

stood watching the departure of the car.

"What under the sun brought you old schemer here?" was what she would have liked to exclaim; but her respect, increased by the tenderness toward sorrow natural to the humblest Irish, made her more deferential to Eleanor than before; and ere she had time to find a more seemly way to gratify her curiosity she was again summoned to the door.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. NORTH FOLLOWS.

It was a visitor of quite another type whom Nannie ushered in to Eleanor now—Mrs. North, in her soft silk and velvet, bright face, and warm, sympathetic manner.

"Dear Miss Crawford," she began—"dear girl, how unkind you must have thought me! I heard indeed of your sad affliction, but I was away at my sister's, and only returned yesterday. How lonely, how sorrowful you must have been!" She put her arm round Eleanor, whose tears were flowing all the more because of the restraint which she had imposed on her feelings during the visit just over. Mrs. North's eyes were running over too. "What a loss, my poor girl!—such a gentle, good father! and so terribly sudden!"

Then she went on in her kind and tender, if not very wise or steadfast, way, to talk of Eleanor coming to her for a nice long visit—she must not be left another day in her dismally lonely house—the children would be so glad to have her, and Georgy had sent a

special love and remembrance. Eleanor could only press her hand in grateful acceptance of her consoling speeches.

If Mrs. North had come before Mrs. David Moore, Eleanor felt that her course might have been different; the softness and sweetness of Mrs. North's manner might have tempted her to alter her decision to depend on herself alone. But Mrs. David's grim practicality had acted like a bitter tonic to brace her for the struggle which lay before her, and which she felt to be, after all, the wisest as well as the noblest course to enter upon. She allowed herself the pleasure of yielding to Mrs. North's caresses and kind expressions, and when she was again calm she told her of the visit she had just received and the offer of a shelter in the old homestead of Kilrogan.

"Oh! my dear Miss Crawford, could you ever bring yourself to stay with that griffin? Pardon me, my dear, but you know she really *is* a griffin—just think of her never show-

ing your dear mamma and papa the least attention, and now it looks like such an impertinence, her coming to you after such neglect."

"I must go somewhere, Mrs. North, and for this winter it would not matter so much. I shall have the daily occupation at school; and if I study Italian closely I know it will enable me to get a better position as governess. If Nannie can come with me (as, if I accept this offer of Mrs. Moore's, she can), it will be a solution of my great difficulty; and I believe there is a great temptation to be under the roof where my dear mother was born and married. I have not yet quite decided on going, but I think it more than probable I shall do so."

"Then, my dear, I really must have a promise from you to spend a few days with me; we shall be entirely free

from company; and if Nannie has to get your rooms ready, you can just as well come to me meanwhile."

Eleanor accepted the invitation, if she found that her going to Kilrogan was decided after a more deliberate reflection; and Mrs. North said adieu, leaving Eleanor comforted and cheered, as a young heart must needs be, by the light of a kindly look and the music of a friendly voice breaking through the heavy cloud of sorrow.

That night she and Nannie sat in deep consultation over Mrs. Moore's proposal. Nannie's aversion to the usurper was secretly counterbalanced by her natural pugnacity, which relished the idea of setting the object of her ancient antipathy at defiance. Anyway, Miss Eleanor would be under the roof that was hers by right, and — a body could never tell what *might* happen.

CHAPTER XVI.

KILROGAN COTTAGE.

ON the third day after Mrs. Moore's call, Eleanor walked, in the sharp, clear air of an afternoon in late September, out along the grassy roadside to the old house of Kilrogan. A wide stream flowed over mossy stones, under which many a shining trout found hiding, breaking into miniature cascades and furrows of foam; an old stone bridge, gray where it was not quite covered with moss and ivy, led over the stream to the hill on whose brow Kilrogan Cottage sat, a two-story house with a brown thatched roof over strong stone walls; but the hard idea conveyed in "stone" and "walls" had no realiza-

tion here, for all over the front of the house climbed moss-roses and clematis, and a small red-flowered fuchsia. Even at this late season there were buds and blossoms in the sheltered nooks; and the windows of small panes, sparkling in the setting sun, were framed in the deep, thick verdure. An iron knocker of most ancient form was on the dark-green door. Martha, a tall, elderly woman, very clean and decent, opened it; and Eleanor was in the home of her ancestors. A thought darted into her mind that there must have been a preparation for her visit, for Mrs. David Moore sat at a small table, on which

an immense Bible was spread open before her, reading intently; so that Eleanor had time to catch every detail of the figure and face in profile between her and the light which streamed in at the window. The angular features, the white hairs on chin and lip giving the face a forbidding and masculine expression, the little rusty cap of black net, and the knotted hands clasped before her on the open Bible, left a vivid picture in Eleanor's mind. Mrs. Moore looked up at length and nodded to her. "Sit down a minute," she said; "I allow nothing to interrupt my reading of the holy Word." Eleanor sat down on the nearest chair, and found abundant occupation in looking round the room. The furniture was quaint and dark with age; chairs of strong mahogany and black hair-cloth, curtains of drab moreen, a few antiquated portraits on the walls, a large, round centre-table, bare and polished till it reflected, in a dim way, the few books (strictly religious) and the basket of wax fruit under a glass shade which stood upon it.

The room was sombre and faded; a tomb-like damp and silence made the hushing of voice and step, on entering, a most natural proceeding. Nothing in it spoke to Eleanor of the happy and free youth which her mother had passed here. She felt that the nature of the present occupant had dominated that of her predecessors, and chased all memory of youth and brightness from their old home.

The sunlight left the window, and gray shadows stole over the figure of the old woman. Her lips moved as she drew her ostentatious devotions to a close. Eleanor started at the strange fitness of the concluding verse from the Book of Job, which Mrs. David read aloud:

"'A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order, where the light is as darkness.'" It seemed so true a description of the mental state of the weird figure who had spoken, that Eleanor almost believed it the utterance of other than the visible presence in the room.

Mrs. Moore closed the great Bible, took off her spectacles and put them in their long case, set the table aside, and came toward Eleanor, who sat silent and quiet, though she knew enough of her aunt's character to feel little surprise at such a reception.

"Good-evenin', Eleanor. So you've come to see the old place at last? Ye'll be thinkin' it vary dull efter the fine houses ye've lived in. I often think mysel' if it was na' fur the will of the Lord, I'd hardly be able to bide it so lang. Weel, I suppose ye'll be wishful to look at the part o' the house that'll be best for ye, an' that I'm willin' to give up til ye." (She was already putting it in the light of a favor conferred.) "So come this way wi' me."

She left the room, preceding Eleanor up the front staircase, then, turning down a passage to the left, descended three or four steps, and they had reached a small wing—three rooms over an outer kitchen and under a sloped roof, which made a small garret, with a little window in the gable. From the windows of this little apartment there was a view which was a delight and a consolation to Eleanor—the roofs of Erna in the distance, green fields and streams and the ivied bridge between; and against the sky the blue hills of Lough Erne's shore. Two rooms could easily be made comfortable for herself; a small one, di-

vided from these by a little lobby, would be nice for Nannie.

"I b'lieve these were yer mother's rooms when she was a girl here; but it's sich a long time since 'at I don't well remember. Anyway, if ye like to take them, here they are, and plenty o' old furniture to mak' them comfortable til ye."

In reply to Eleanor's questions, she named a rent which she well knew would have paid for much larger and better lodgings in the town; but Eleanor longed for the sweet quiet which

she would find here, and did not object to the demand.

It was arranged that Nannie should come out and prepare the rooms while Eleanor made her promised visit to Mrs. North; and with the well-understood condition that her goings and comings should be absolutely unrestricted, she returned to the sad and lonely house where Nannie, awaiting her return, heard, half pleased, half discontented, that their home for the winter was to be under the old roof of Kilrogan Cottage.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNLUCKY LOVER.

THE summer at Rathlinn Farm faded into autumn as swiftly as it had passed with the preacher's family in Erna; but though death had left no gap in the household of Brian M'Manus, there were other disturbing elements at war with the peace of Norah and Tessy. The crops had not done well; heavy rains, which had in spring interfered with the planting, had continued far into the summer; rents were behindhand; the hopelessness of the weak spirits, the discontent of the turbulent, had increased.

The prolonged absence of Mr. Rohan, who in late summer had gone to the Continent, discouraged the better tenants, who had hoped to find in the young landlord something of his mother's spirit of interest and affection for them. And Tessy—bright, warm-hearted, busy Tessy!—what had brought such change to her? Her listless, half-hearted ways about her work,

her restlessness and dulness, did not escape her mother's anxious eyes; yet there was nothing definite enough to give her reason to call on Tessy for an explanation.

After the day of the fair at Carrick, Mr. Rohan had come back and forth many times to Rathlinn. In his manner to M'Manus and his wife he was kind and pleasant; with Tessy open and light-hearted as ever, walking with her in the lane and to the meadow, laughing, jesting, and admiring her in a way to which even Norah, with all her motherly watchfulness, could take no exception.

But eyes sharpened, or clouded, rather, by jealousy, were watching Tessy and the young squire. A little while after the Carrick Fair, Denis Kiernan had met them both in the long lane, and from that moment he had made up his mind as to Tessy's reason for refusing to listen to his suit. Passion-

ate and impulsive in love and hate, as his nation has always been, he lashed himself into a bitter hatred of Rohan, while his love for Tessy grew more intense. At last he took the resolution of making an appeal to Norah, and on an afternoon late in August he went up to the farm-house of Rathlinn.

Norah sat knitting just within the porch, while the door stood open to the pleasant air, though a bright fire burned in the kitchen behind her. Tessy had gone to the milking; the children were all with her, and Norah was alone. She looked up as Kieran's shadow crossed the door-step, and rose to welcome him.

"Ah, thin, good-evenin', Denny agra! It's glad I am to see ye. An' is the father an' mother an' all belongin' to ye right well? Come in an' rest yerself, an' take the sup o' whiskey-an'-water. Brian's away; but shure I'll find *that* for ye, anyway."

Norah talked fast, with an instinct of a stormy tide in Denis's mind which she might be able to stem with her voluble tongue; so she was over profuse in her welcome.

"Thank ye kindly, Mrs. M'Manus, but I'll not be goin' inside this evenin'. 'Tis jist a word wid yersel' I'm wantin', so I'll sit on the creepie here, if ye're willin'."

Norah sat down again, while Denis drew the three-legged wooden seat beside her.

"Plase yerself, ma bouchal," she answered, "'twould be a'most a shame to go into the house out o' this soft evenin'."

Denis rested his elbows on his knees and swung the cap which he held to and fro between them. He was the model of a handsome Irish peasant, but the face which should

have been lit by the merry look natural to the dark eyes and mobile features wore a sombre, threatening expression. "Mrs. M'Manus," he began, clearing his throat with a nervous cough, "I'm a bad hand at batin' about the bush, an' I jist want to ask ye what that young sprig o' a landlord o' yours (an' ours, curse him!) manes comin' here so often an' walkin' wid Tessy the way he does? Ye're no stranger to what I've thought about *her*, ever since she was a shlip o' a girl an' me a long-legged gorsoon. She never had anythin' but the kind word for me till this *gentleman*" (and Denis laid a bitter emphasis on the word, which made it an opprobrious epithet) "came prowlin' about. There's more than me has a grudge again' him; an' if Tessy 'ud only give me the hint, I'd soon send him about his business. But she won't. Ever since the Carriek Fair she'll hardly look the same side o' the road wid me; an' I know she's mistrustin' me an' watchin' me, for I wouldn't give her me promise not to join a lodge; an' she's doubtin' that I'm after no good."

"Well, Denny, if she cares enough about ye for all that, sure it's a sign she has the good-will to ye."

"Ay," answered Denis, with a short, hard laugh, "she cares enough for me to want to keep me from workin' mischief to them that she cares a mighty dale more for. Now, Mrs. M'Manus, if you'll stand me friend an' let *me* tell Mister Rohan that I've yer own word that Tessy 'll be me wife, I can soon tak' him in han'."

"Denis Kiernan, do ye know what ye're talkin' about?" and Norah's cheeks flushed an angry red. "Ye must be clane out o' yer mind to come here wid sich a colloqucin'! Me little

girl's not a firkin' o' butter or a stack o' hay, to be bargained for that way. She's as free as the blessed airs o' heaven to go an' come on her father's floor, an' to take or lave any dacent boy that coorts her *like* a dacent boy. An' as for the honest gentleman" (the word sounded differently from Norah's lips), "that comes an' goes, takin' his pleasure at the fishin' or shootin', don't *dar'* to even anythin' wrong to him or me Tessy! Her father 'll see that she's safe from harm, never fear, even if she was fool enough to be thinkin' too much of the young gentleman's purty spaches (an' the saints knows she's not)—far be the evil thought from his mother's son! the heavens be her bed!"

Denis rose abashed; his desperate move had been a mistake, and had brought him only renewed defeat. He was turning away, scowling and angry, when Norah, who also was standing, laid her hand on the young man's arm.

"See here, Denny alanna," she said, in a kind voice, "let the colleen alone for a while. The crathur's young an' foolish yet, but two or three years 'll do a dale to'rd *insinsin'* her into what's for her good. Ye know well that ye've the good-will uv her father an' meself, but ye can't force a girl's

fancy, ma bouchal. Lave her to herself, an' just look pleasant an' spake fair to her, an' see if she doesn't come round after a while."

Denis's face softened: "I'll try to take yer advice, an' thank ye kindly for it, Mrs. M'Manus; but it's hard to be smilin' an' contint whin yer standin' in the cowl'd an' wet, seein' all the sun-shine straimin' on them that maybe doesn't care a ha'porth for it."

Norah looked after him as he went slowly down the lane. "To think I'd allow there was any sich folly in the girl's head!" she said to herself; "but oh, sweet saints above help me! I'm afraid it's the truth!"

She thought of Tessy's altered ways—her cheek and eye pale and sad in Gerald's long absences, flushed and sparkling the moment his step crossed the threshold.

"I'll have to spake to her meself," she sighed. "It's nothin' but her own foolish notion, for I'm sartain shure Mr. Gerald 'ud scorn to say the false word to her. If it wasn't so long till he'll be here again, I could aisy give himself a weeny hint; or if men crathurs wasn't so awkward an' clumsy at any little matter o' the sort, I'd get Brian to give him just the wind o' a word to keep that foolish Denny from makin' mischief."





CHAPTER XVIII.

TESSY'S CONFESSION.

TESSY and the children, coming back just at that moment, put an end to Norah's thoughts and plans. She smoothed the trouble out of her comely face, and went to meet Tessy, knitting swiftly the while.

"Did ye meet Denis Kiernan, dear?" she said, innocently. "Shure he was here wid the friendly word from the mother about the red cow, an' I sent him to meet ye an' the childer in the meadow below."

The fact of what she was saying not being strictly true, if it entered Norah's mind at all, caused her not the least compunction; she wished to draw conclusions from certain premises of her own construction, and her words stood for the mere bricks and mortar necessary to the process.

"I didn't meet e'er a one in the lane, mother; an' if it was Denis Kiernan I'd met, 'tis small spache he'd get from me!"

"Why is that, then, Tessy?"

"Oh," said Tessy, with a toss of her head, "he had the face to tell me, after mass a couple o' Sundays ago, that I wasn't doin' right!"

"An' what handle did ye lave him for sayin' that, Tessy?" And Norah looked keenly at her daughter. Tessy reddened, but did not answer.

Norah turned to the children. "Get

away in to yer suppers!" she called. "There's a noggin o' milk, an' a round o' white bread apiece for yez on the kitchen-table; an' mind, don't forget yer manners!" (Grace before meat was, in Norah's estimation, a becoming politeness to the Giver.)

She went with Tessy to the large, cool milk-room, helping her with the straining and the skimming, the weighing and packing of the butter, trying in many little ways to win the girl to a brighter mood; but Tessy looked vexed, and would hardly speak. When the children's supper was done, the table cleared, and the fire replenished, Norah and Tessy sat down to their cup of tea. Then the mother waited till the children were in bed, the servants either gone also to rest or out on neighborly visits, and everything quiet in the old farm-house. Anxious-hearted Norah watched her girl as she moved about in the ruddy light of the kitchen fire, restlessly placing and altering various articles around, putting off, as long as she could, the lecture which she felt sure her mother was preparing for her. At last Norah called her.

"Come here, child! Why, ye used to like to bring the needles and sit beside me, Tessy. What has come to ye, that ye keep away from me so this while

back? Come here, child, an' let me spake to ye!" Tessy came slowly, with averted looks, and took a seat by her mother. "What did Denis Kieran say ye weren't doin' right about, agra? Tell me, now."

"Somethin' that was no business o' his, mother. He saw Mr. Rohan walkin' in the meadow below, waitin' till I'd milked the cows, to walk home wid me, and Denis took it on him to say I'd no business in the company o' one so much above me."

"Well, maybe Denny *has* a bit o' right to be jealous, Tessy."

"What right, then, mother, when I never gave him as much as a look that 'ud tell him I thought more o' him than e'er another? An' he's in some mischief, mother," she went on, hurriedly; "I'm 'most sure he's plottin' wid them wild boys o' Dan Moriarty's an' them two black-lookin' villains that's taken Cassidy's 'public.'"

"Well, Tessy avourneen, I'll ask ye jist one question: If Denny *was* yer sweetheart, now, would he have any rason to be jealous of the young landlord?"

She spoke in a light tone, meaning to conceal the real seriousness of her question.

"Mother, the Holy Virgin herself knows that Mr. Rohan niver said one word to me, barrin' a foolish little bit o' blarney now an' again, but what yer own ears or me father's might ha' listened to."

"An' shure yerself 'll not care if ye niver set eyes on him again," said Norah, as if she took it as a matter of course that Tessy would quite agree with her. But a low sobbing cry came from the girl's very heart.

"Niver set eyes on him! Oh, mother!"—Tessy's voice shook and choked

with the passion she could no longer control—"then I niver care to set eyes on the blessed light or the flowers or yer own face, mother, for *he's* all them an' more to me. Ah!"—she pressed her hands on her bosom—"the ground that his shadow falls on 's niver common ground to me again! I'd as soon be deaf an' dumb an' blind as not to hear his voice or look at him or spake to him again! There now, mother!" She stood, panting and flushed, before poor Norah a moment, then flung herself into her arms.

"Oh, mother, mother! it's wild I am wid the shame an' the anger at me own heart, for sure I am *his* heart's full o' another, wid niver a thought for me. Ay, I was proud enough once, but now I'd go on me knees on the hardest road to get one smile from him; an' he'll niver care to know it!"

Norah held the girl on her lap, rocking to and fro in her sorrow and sympathy for this wild grief of her unhappy child.

"Och, Tessy! ma colleen oge! ma-vourneen! achorra machree!" she moaned, heaping the tender endearments so eloquent in the Irish tongue on her child, for she found no words of comfort or reason to bestow upon her. "Mary, mother o' sorrows! look down on me innocent darlin', an' tache her to take the heart out o' her breast sooner than disgrace herself wid the love that's not fit for her!"

"Ah, mother dear!" sobbed Tessy, "can I do nothin' to take my mind from the thoughts that make it go round an' round till I'm nigh hand ravin' wild?"

"Couldn't ye spake a word o' yer trouble to Father Cavanagh, darlin'?" whispered Norah.

"Och, mother! if I *would* say a

word in the way of my duty, what could the priest, holy man! know about the ragin' grief of a young girl's heart, despisin' itself for the love that has naither hope nor sense in it? But, mother, poor Winny Moriarty was tellin' me how once, in a black trouble, she made a station to Lough Derg, an' while she was prayin' at the Holy Lake the sorrow got lighter, and she felt as if the Blessed Virgin was takin' the pain away. Would ye let me go there, mother dear? Father Cavanagh would lay the penance on me, an' wid his blessin', an' the help o' the saints, I might come back to ye like me old self."

"Whisht a while, Tessy asthore! let me think a bit. Maybe I might get goin' with ye myself. Shure, if the comfort's to be got there, I might as well go an' take me share, an' see after

me poor colleen too. Shure, Winny's me own cousin, an' she'd see to the house an' the childer a while. But 'tis a long road to the Holy Lough, isn't it, Tessy?"

"Well, mother, the car could lave us a good bit o' the way, an' we're both good walkers; an' if there's hardship, all the better for the poor soul an' the achin' heart. Oeh hone!" She sobbed and sighed till, like a tired child, she had grieved her heart out and lay quiet on her mother's breast. Norah brought her to her own bed, and watched till the slumber, broken by sobs at first, had deepened into the blessed, restoring sleep of youth and health. Then, with many a fervent prayer to Virgin, saint, and angel, the mother lay down beside her, and took such rest as was possible to her loving, grieving, maternal heart.

CHAPTER XIX.

GERALD ROHAN GETS A HINT AND A LETTER.

It was Michaelmas-day—the half-yearly rent-day at Annadale—and a small anteroom to the library was prepared as an office, where Gerald Rohan would receive his tenants as they came to pay their rent. Prospects were no brighter than they had been in summer. Heavy, continuous rains, the misery of the harvesting in Ireland, had fallen; crops were poor, and rents hard to scrape together. Like so many landlords, Gerald had hitherto received his income through a steward or bailiff, seldom coming into personal relations with the farmers, to whom, with one or two exceptions, such as Brian

McManus, he was almost unknown. Naturally pleasure-loving, and looking only at the sunny side of life, he had troubled himself very little about the character or circumstances of the people on his estate; but this year he was forced into closer acquaintance with his affairs, for his bailiff had, by many acts of injustice and inconsiderateness, if no worse, become very obnoxious to the tenants, and, taking fright at some slight demonstration against him, had given Mr. Rohan very brief notice, called in all his available means, and emigrated. It was difficult then to find a competent substitute, and Rohan

felt he must no longer put off the evil day of coming face to face with the real state of his affairs. He sat in his breakfast-room, with a cloud on his handsome face. Brian M'Manus had left him but a minute ago. The old farmer had come some hours before the time for the reception of the tenants, begging to be admitted while his landlord was alone. He was, as usual, prepared to pay his rent in full, but after taking his receipt he lingered, regarding Gerald with a wistful, pleading look.

"Well, M'Manus," said Gerald, "what is it? Anything I can do for you?"

"Well, sir, ye see," said Brian, making his manner more solemn than he had any intention of doing, and thus going far toward what Norah feared his masculine want of tact might lead him to, "if ye'll not take it ill, there is a little matter that Norah and me has been thinkin' it best you should be spoke with about. 'Tis in regard to the little colleen at home, sir—the girl that's the apple of her mother's eye, sir, an' the core o' our hearts. Far be it from us to think any wrong of it, sir," he blundered on, "but, ye see, the naybors will be talkin', and that young Denis Kiernan's that jealous o' Tessy that seein' you walkin' with her was enough to set him wild; an' if we might just give ye a word, or the wind of it even, about comin' to the house—"

Poor Brian stopped, hot and miserable. His love for the young squire, his pride in his friendship, his sense of hospitality, and the honor due to the lord of the soil were all outraged, and for what? Just a foolish notion of Norah's brain and a mean jealousy of young Kiernan's. Tessy, indeed! his innocent little girl, and this proud young Rohan!

Gerald had flushed angrily. "Am I to understand, M'Manus, that you suppose I could mean harm to any one under your roof? Did your wife give you this message to deliver?"

"Well, now, yer honor, I think ye've known me an' mine long enough to be sure that ye've no truer or more willing servants on all yer lands than us. As I said before, *we'd* be far from thinkin' ill o' ye talkin' or walkin' with our girl when ye're under our roof; but I'm surmisin' it's some word that young sweetheart o' Tessy's has said to the mother that's driven her to spake to me about it. If I've angered ye, Mr. Gerald, it's small thanks I'll get from Norah. She'd have made a better hand o' the matter than I've done, sir."

"Angered me! certainly not, M'Manus," returned Gerald. "But you must tell your wife that I see it is best for me to leave off my visits to the farm for some time; indeed, I shall probably be far away for the most of the winter."

The words were not unkind, but they were spoken coldly, and Brian knew too well that he had fulfilled Norah's worst fears of his clumsiness and wrongheadedness. Especially had he done ill to mention Denis Kiernan's name. He was aware of the ill-will he bore to Rohan, and if any trouble rose between them now he would be much to blame. He rose, with a sigh, from the chair where he had been sitting uneasily, and, looking wistfully at Gerald, said, in a low voice,

"I'd be mighty sorry for any offense between you an' me, sir, especially now when them that manes true an' honest by each other ought to be able to depend on each other more than ever."

Gerald held out his hand. "Don't fear, McManus," he said. "I don't doubt your loyalty to me. I should be very ungrateful to do that after all these years. Don't think any more about this silly affair."

McManus pressed the offered hand with the utmost respect, said a few words more of confused apology, and left the room.

"Devil take the women!" he muttered. "I'd rather have got a duckin' in the horse-pond than have made such an ass o' myself, an' angered the squire all for nothin'! The hot blood o' his father an' the pride o' his mother, that was like the lily itself, that clane an' stately, started up in his face and eyes when I as much as mentioned the disrespectful thought! 'Tis the mother's folly"—he said again—"God love her! an' who can blame her aither?"

He rode away on his cob, mentally arranging the account of the interview, which of course Norah would exact from him, in such a guise as would make it appear a masterpiece of tact and diplomacy.

Gerald sat a while in deep and uneasy thought. Although this question of his friendship with Tessy was an added annoyance, it was only a slight one, for he never for a moment suspected the sorrowful share which her heart bore in the matter. However he might be aware of his own personal advantages, he was singularly free from vanity in his good looks. Where was the Rohan who had not been distinguished for beauty of form and feature? The *race* had always bequeathed their descendants that gift, and in his share of the inheritance there was the added grace of a beautiful mother. His real disturbance arose from a letter received yesterday from Mr. North,

and which he now unfolded, to read again the passage in it which informed him of Mr. Crawford's death:

"You will be sorry to hear that my friends, the Methodists here, have lost their old preacher. Mr. Crawford died suddenly over two weeks ago. Of a better stamp than will be easily found among the more pretentious brethren of the new pattern, we could better have spared many of *them* than this one of the elder generation. His daughter is left sadly alone, but, I presume, will find relatives to whom she can go; though, indeed, now that I think of it, I heard Emily say she was sure the poor girl must be utterly desolate, and that she must see her, and show her what kindness she could."

It was a real sorrow to Gerald Rohan to know that he would see Mr. Crawford no more. He had been impressed and drawn to the old man by his gentle kindness of manner, his interest in him, and his affection and reverence for his mother's memory. But Eleanor! that beautiful girl left to battle with the world! to win by laborious teaching a poor subsistence, despised by those unworthy to compare with her, fading into a lonely, unloved old maidenhood! That, at least, was the picture which presented itself to Gerald's imagination.

If Mr. Crawford had lived, it would most likely have been long till Gerald had discovered what his feelings for Eleanor really were. The tie between them seemed so close, and her father relied so entirely on Eleanor's care and companionship, that it was not likely that she would assume any other relation. But the old preacher was dead—Eleanor alone!

Gerald recalled every meeting with her—almost every word she had spo-

ken to him, since he had found her, like a rare flower or a precious jewel, beside him in the square old pew. He thought of her in the boat on Lough Erne, glowing with health and pleasure, as they climbed the heathery hillside; and as he lived over the few hours of his companionship with her in a few rapid moments of thought, with a great hot throb the blood surged from heart to brain with the swift message of passionate, unquestionable love. What a wife she would be, if her heart might be won! Who, of all the beautiful women whom he had seen, could he have brought to his mother with such certainty of worthiness of a daughter's place and love as Eleanor Crawford? True, among the "gentry" of the county and his neighborhood there was not a mother or a daughter who would not pronounce him lowered by marrying the daughter of a Methodist preacher who supported herself by teaching. For himself, Gerald could make light of their

absurd class-distinctions; but to subject Eleanor to the contempt of the only society he could place her in would be a cruelty to which he would not willingly expose her. Perhaps some good woman of his own rank might counsel him and help him—Mrs. North, for instance; she was a happy wife and a loving mother. He would go to her with his love, and his determination to seek Eleanor for a wife, and win her good-will and interest for himself and this beloved girl.

While he pondered thus, folding and unfolding the letter which had started his love into sudden life in his restless hands, the servant entered to announce the arrival of a tenant. Gerald gathered up his wandering thoughts, and betook himself to his long-neglected duties, seeking to make at least a beginning of acquaintance with the people who had in the long-gone years, generation after generation, yielded their labors, their lives of toil and privation, to support his race.





CHAPTER XX.

PAYING THE RENT.

As one after another of his farm tenants came with the rent, some few, with honest pride in their ability to meet all dues, advancing with the hard coin which is alone the strictly legal tender for rents; others, too numerous, alas! brought but a trifling part of the sum, with miserable stories of loss and "bad luck" (the Irish equivalent for thriftlessness, idleness, and drink); others had complaints to make against Barton, the late bailiff, for injustice and severity, neglect of property and the interests of both tenants and landlord. These disclosures, reflecting on the carelessness of his life, distressed and irritated Gerald, and his self-reproach reached its culmination when, in signing a receipt for the rent of a farm whose former tenant had been well known to him, he perceived that a stranger's name had replaced the one hitherto connected with that part of the property. Some inquiries of a neighbor of the old tenant who stood by, only too ready to give the information asked, brought out the whole story. The long lease having expired, Barton, without reference to Gerald's authority (the young squire was absent in Paris just then, conveniently for the bailiff), had ejected the tenant whose forefathers had been in possession for many generations, and who had led a

life of steady industry, and made many important improvements on the place. For these improvements, amounting in value to several hundred pounds, not one penny of allowance had been made. A friend of the bailiff had made a "better offer," the old tenant was ousted, and, hopeless of ever seeing better days in the old home, had emigrated with his whole family. In the course of his narrative this man disclosed, unconsciously, a state of dangerous discontent among the younger men of the county. Denis Kiernan's name dropped, in his unguarded talk, and served to heighten the dislike which Gerald already felt to the jealous spy on his walks with Tessy. Late in the afternoon young Kiernan himself appeared, his bearing anything but that of a well-disposed and respectable rent-payer. Scowling and unmannerly, he approached his landlord and laid before him a roll of bank-notes, soiled and crumpled. Gerald looked up at him haughtily.

"What is this rubbish, sir?" he said, frowning.

"Faith," answered the young farmer, with a short laugh, "'tis the rubbish that manures some o' the fine sprigs o' gentility that we have among us! 'Tis askin' yer pardon I ought to be," he went on, with affected humility, "for comin' into yer presence, but my

father, poor man, is down with the fever, an' tould me to come, or I'd not have made so free. He gave me the notes to get changed for goold in Carriek, but I thought maybe yer *honor*"—he laid a bitter stress on the word—"might be glad to get the notes themselves, as well as many another landlord in the country, these times."

The young fellow's tone was insufferably insolent. Gerald, with an impulse of anger, repented of at the moment of its accomplishment, lifted the paper on which the roll of money lay, and flung it through the open window to the lawn.

"Take your filthy money and yourself out of my sight," he said, "till you are both changed into something more fit for decent company!"

Kiernan's face was passion-white. One scowl he threw on Gerald, and then turned to leave the room, but at the door he stopped, unable to control his vindictive anger.

"The next rent I pay ye, Mr. Rohan," he said, in a hoarse voice, "will be in *yer own coin*, maybe, if *that* 'll plaze ye!"

Gerald made no reply. The shame and compunction which, with a naturally noble nature, are sure to follow the commission of an unworthy deed had brought to him a feeling of inferiority to the young man whose bitter enmity he had just secured.

When the day, so unhappy to him in the self-condemnation which its disclosures drew upon him, had ended, Gerald Rohan sat, after his solitary dinner, communing with himself—a process hitherto rare in his trivial, unthinking life. Since his mother's death things had been going badly with his estate, and with his own char-

acter among the tenants. The influence which her goodness and nobility of life had secured over their minds and hearts had almost disappeared. Certainly, his own careless, easy conduct had done nothing to maintain it, and now no friend was near with counsel or help to show him how to deal with his many perplexities. For a moment he thought, "I can put another bailiff in Barton's place, and fly from the whole cursed thing—go into the army or live abroad, where none of this miserable mess can get at me."

But the twilight shadows did not help him to keep this bravado mood. A silent influence stole about him from the gray dusk. Would *that* be worthy of the love which had done so much for him in the past—his mother's love, to which his heart had never failed to respond? Would that be the means to secure the love and estimation which he would fain win from Eleanor?

To stay where every motive of honor and duty claimed his presence, to work among the people, too long regarded as the mechanical tools of his interests and fortune, giving his whole strength of mind and soul to the work—yes, that was a course which seemed to require true manliness and courage. But was his nature capable of it? "Yes—if Eleanor were with you?"

The response seemed so prompt and so distinct, so entirely outside of his own mental consciousness, that he started violently, and half rose up. "Good God! mother, did you speak?" he said aloud.

The spell was broken by his audible voice, and with a half-smile at his own fancy, he lit his candle and sought his room, thankful that the long day was over and the time of sleep come.



CHAPTER XXI.

ELEANOR AT NORTH VILLA.

THE welcome which Eleanor received from Mrs. North, who at the end of the week after her visit brought the orphan girl to the villa, was almost as different from Mrs. Moore's reception as were the two women in face and form.

The children crowded round Eleanor with shy but warm greeting. The contrast which their bright faces, the cheery fires, and the living warmth and comfort of the household made to the desolate, silent house she had just left was almost overpowering. Mrs. North at once brought her to her room, where she left her in a deep chair before a glowing fire to recover composure.

"You have just an hour and a half before dinner, my dear," she said. "Mr. North is still away, and the children pleaded so to come to table with us, that, as I thought you would like them around you, I have allowed them to do so."

Eleanor looked gratefully at her, but had no voice to answer her, and with a kiss Mrs. North left her to rest.

"How kind and sweet she is!" thought Eleanor, remembering with remorse how she had at first resented the slight infusion of condescension in Mrs. North's manner. How easy it seemed to accept *that*, when it was ac-

companied by such warmth of heart, such real goodness! "I was almost rude to her, and now how desolate I should be but for her! Her sympathy has made life seem as if it might be worth something else. It will give me courage to take up my daily round of work, to have warmed my chilled heart at the glow of this happy home life. Oh, how good it must be to live with all this love and comfort around one!" A few tears fell from her eyes, called forth partly by the contrast of her own lonely lot, partly by the reaction from the strain on her self-control, her sorrow, and the effort of the last weeks; but it was not Eleanor's nature to yield weakly to any emotion, and she closed her eyes and leaned her head back in her chair, quietly accepting the rest and strength which flowed over her heart and mind.

She rose up, calm and cheerful, when Miss Irwin came to offer her help and all good offices of friendship; and Miss Irwin, under all her primness and old maidishness, had a soft heart for those in sorrow. "Are you rested nicely, Miss Crawford? If you're not *quite* able to come down to dinner, I'm sure Mrs. North won't mind."

"Oh, thank you," said Eleanor, "I am only too glad to sit at a table with

bright faces round it once more. It will be more comforting to me than perhaps you can understand, Miss Irwin."

"Ah! my dear, don't you suppose I can enter into your feelings? Indeed, I have had my own share of sorrow in life, for my poor papa died and left mamma and my two brothers and me very lonely, and papa was a distinguished soldier, which made it all the harder to bear."

Eleanor rather wondered how, when four of a family were left together, great loneliness could be their condition, and felt puzzled to explain to herself why the martial superiority of Miss Irwin's "papa" should enhance his loss. But the good soul was hovering about her, giving tender little touches to her hair and dress, and, when Eleanor was quite ready, she opened the door to show her the way to the drawing-room.

Georgy stood waiting at the head of the stairs, a little in awe of Eleanor, whose importance she felt, as the young will do, must be increased by the dignity of grief. But Eleanor had no desire or intention to bring a cloud into the merry young group, and she kissed Georgy with a bright smile as she took her hand to go down-stairs.

"Why, what a great girl you are growing, dear! I think you are some inches taller than when we went boating that day; do you remember?"

"Oh yes, indeed! Miss Crawford; it was the pleasantest day of the whole summer, though we had a good holiday at the seaside when papa took us in July."

"And the lessons, Georgy — have they begun again?"

Georgy made a wry face. "Oh yes! they've begun, and they'll go on,

too, for Miss Irwin hasn't ever the least idea of leaving off when she has once begun."

Miss Irwin's car was out of range when this was said, as she had gone back for the younger children. Mrs. North was in the room we have once before described, looking, with its many flowers, almost as spring-like as it did then, only a bright fire of sea-coal burned in the polished grate.

Young Jack, as Mr. North's heir was called, was the only masculine element in the party, for his two younger brothers were merely babies in his estimation, and better suited to the company of girls. He felt rather inclined to be reserved and dignified, as being out of his proper sphere among ladies and babies, but he had no power to resist the charm of Eleanor's manner, interested in all sorts of boy delights, studies, and sports. He was soon beside her, taking his full share of talk with Georgy and the other children. Mrs. North placed Eleanor next to her at dinner, attentive in her kindly, gracious way to the least want of her guest. The account of the summer, its adventures on shore and sea, which the children were eager to give to Eleanor, made a pleasant subject of conversation, and soon removed all feeling of restraint imposed by their deference to Eleanor's mourning and the knowledge of her great sorrow, leaving only a tenderness as pretty for them to show as it was grateful for Eleanor to receive.

The evening passed in a recitation of Georgy's latest musical acquirements, some childish games of chance, a little reading of fairy stories which Eleanor volunteered, and which her full, sweet voice and spirited manner made "nearly as good as seeing it all,"

as Georgy said, to the young listeners.

When the pleasant hours were past, and bedtime had come for the young people, Mrs. North and Miss Irwin and Eleanor sat with the lamp lowered in the soft glow of the fire, Eleanor feeling thoroughly rested and comforted in this sunshine of home life. Yet she knew it was but the pilgrim's rest which was granted to her. A certain consciousness of a love of luxury, bright surroundings, and refinement in every form, warned her that the true advancement of her life could never be attained in such an atmosphere. She must take her staff and don her sandal shoon, and away on the road, rough and thorny though it might be, which alone could lead her to the celestial city of Blessed Rest beyond the Delectable Mountains of noble endeavor. But now she would allow herself full enjoyment of this interval of peace and brightness.

At the end of the week Mr. North returned, having finished some county business which had called him from home. The children were in high spirits, having him again with them, for he was, as Jack said, "As good as any boy to play with." Mrs. North had many questions to ask of the people among whom her husband had been, their friends and neighbors.

"Have you seen or heard of Mr. Rohan, John? It is so long since he has been here."

"Well, I did expect to have seen

him, and had every intention of taking the longest way round and going to Annadale before getting home; but among the last package of letters you sent me there was one from Rohan saying he would be here as soon as 'rent-day' was past; and as that is in the end of September, and this is the beginning of October, I suppose we may expect him in a few days. I fancied from his letter that things have not been going very pleasantly with him; and there are not good accounts from his part of the country, what with bad harvests and bad behavior of the uneasy spirits."

"I am surprised that Government can't put a stop to all those dreadful things," said Mrs. North. "It seems to me it would be easy to show the foolish people that it was entirely their wisest plan to be content and peaceable. I know I could do it if I were the Government!"

"I am sure, Emily," said Mr. North, "'Government' would be charmed to enlist your services, if it was only aware of your great power; and if you'll just mention it to the Queen herself, I'm confident she'll appoint you at once as prime pacificatress."

"Now, John, you are quizzing me, as usual. You know I wouldn't touch any of your dreadful politics—though I know I could—"

She did not finish her sentence, for Georgy came to her with the request that she might take Eleanor to the woods to gather some late ferns.





CHAPTER XXII.

ENNISMORE CASTLE.

ELEANOR's heart had been giving notice, by a little more rapidity in its pulsations, that she was not quite indifferent to the news of Gerald Rohan's coming, and she was glad to go out into the crisp, frosty air with Georgy. She said to herself she would regret it so very much if she should still be at North Villa when Mr. Rohan came. The remembrance of his last visits to her, when her father had been so pleased at his presence, brought a freshening of her sorrow, and a fear that to see him again would not help her much to the calmness and fortitude for which she was striving. "Much better we should never meet," she thought, "now that our lives must be so entirely separate." Yet it was impossible to believe that he would rest satisfied never again to see her. Little experience as she had in affairs of the heart, she felt that his looks and words, however guarded and subdued, spoke of a more than fleeting regard or cold admiration. And this impassable barrier between them, what was it? Only the poor, small class-distinctions narrowing and belittling the society of the time. All through this visit there had been held before her by her hostess, without rudeness or personality indeed, this question of "class." "How easily I could over-

step such absurd, unreal obstacles!" thought Eleanor; "but I happen to be on the wrong side of the barrier," she smiled to herself, "to make any ignoring of it effective."

Then she fell to speculating whether riches would take away her disqualifications for this "good society." Surely *good* society would not accept a plebeian with a gilded coat. That would be to become plebeian and vulgar on good society's own part. No; it must be the fact that she "earned her living," which placed her in an inferior rank to those otherwise on an equal footing of education and breeding. As to birth, her father's family was quite as much "gentry" as any of the county people could pretend to be; while her mother, if from a more homely stock, had an honorable ancestry of independent yeomen.

Mrs. North was quite ready to defer to her in all questions of intellectual culture; then, whence came this conviction that she was held to be socially inferior to the society in which she now was, and so much inferior to Gerald Rohan's rank that she felt she must avoid the least appearance of seeking his society? Was it, after all, in her own imagination? or might it not be the long shadow of the ideas received in early life, that between the Lord's

people, as the Methodists loved to call themselves, and the "Church" people, worldlings and profane, there was a wide gulf, to overstep which would be only too surely to imperil the future happiness of the Methodist soul.

"Miss Crawford! Indeed, dear Miss Crawford, I have asked you over and over again to look at this fern and tell me if it is the true maiden-hair," said Georgy, in an aggrieved voice, "and I believe you never heard me once!"

"Forgive me, Georgy," said Eleanor; "I quite lost myself in thinking, and I have proved myself a very dull companion; but now I am all awake again, and I am ready to tell you the names of all the ferns I know. Come down to this little mossy hollow, where I see a thread of silver trickling over the dark stones: there will be some famous ferns there, I'm sure."

They stepped through the autumn woods, the dry leaves rustling underfoot, and yielding the peculiar "russet" odor of the ripened and fallen, but not yet dead leaves. It was a narrow strip of planted forest, for nothing of the grand, primeval woods which once crowned and beautified Ireland remains now. Leading from the meadow behind North Villa, it skirted a road which stretched, white and wide, straight to a larger wood or plantation, over the tops of which rose the feudal-looking towers of Ennismore Castle.

"It isn't far, Miss Crawford. Do let us go on and see the castle. Our old nurse's daughter is house-keeper there now, and will let us into the drawing-room. Old Lady Ennismore has had it done all under her own eye, and some of it, they say, she did with her own hand."

"I could not do that, dear," answered Eleanor; "mamma would not like

it. But as it is so early in the day, we might go back and ask for her permission, and see also if Miss Irwin will go with us."

Georgy was ready to own this would be only right, and they returned to the house with some lovely ferns for Mrs. North's wardian case.

Consent for the walk to Ennismore was readily obtained; only, as lunch was just then ready, Miss Irwin suggested that it would be wise to secure that first.

Immediately after, Georgy and Eleanor, with Jack and Miss Irwin, set out through the wood, which took them to Ennismore by a much shorter walk. A wide gate opened to the fine avenue of beech-trees which led up a steep ascent to the castle. It was of gray stone, with turrets and Gothic doorways. The house-keeper admitted them willingly. The Lady Ennismore would be glad that Mrs. North's daughter should see her room, she knew. She led them through a lofty hall, decorated with fine armor and some few statues, on which the light from a tall stained-glass window fell in many hues. Ascending a few wide steps of polished oak, they entered the drawing-room, where a most unique and startling style of decoration had just been completed. The wall was panelled in paper of a soft, satiny white ground. Each panel had the life-size figure of one of the immense birds of Eastern countries. Ostriches, emus, peacocks, ibises, flamingoes stood erect in all the native splendor of their plumage. Other species, of smaller size, but as brilliant in color, filled the spaces over doors and mirrors. At the farther end of the spacious room a sort of alcove, arched and lofty, was set, inlaid with specimens of every known kind of Irish

marble. This it was which the old Lady Ennismore had done partly with her own hand, and the design for which she had originated. It was a singular piece of work for a lady so aged to have undertaken, and all her life after Eleanor remembered the fantastic effect which it produced. The furniture was designed to correspond with the walls. It was rich and odd, yet, altogether, not unpleasing. A grand piano stood near the marble alcove: it was a rarity in Ireland at the day of which we write.

Georgy and the others, having admired and wondered till praise and astonishment were exhausted, went toward the great bay-window which commanded a view of woodland and avenue, and Eleanor stood by, delighted with the noble prospect. An exclamation from Georgy directed her attention to the entrance at the foot of the lawn.

"I declare, there's papa and a gentleman with him! Can it be—yes, it is—Mr. Rohan?" and Georgy and Jack rushed, all unmindful of Miss Irwin's despairing cry of "Oh! children, children!" through the hall and out of the door to meet their father and his companion.

In a few minutes they all entered together, and Mr. Rohan greeted Eleanor and Miss Irwin. He had arrived just after luncheon. Mrs. North had gone in the carriage to make a call at some distance, and Mr. North had proposed to follow the ladies and children to Ennismore.

Once in Gerald's presence, Eleanor entirely forgot the feelings and thoughts which had been disturbing her a few hours before. The first sharp pang of memory of her father's presence when

she had last seen him over, and Mr. Rohan's respectful and sympathizing greeting given, she felt it all most natural. It seemed a perfecting of the pleasure of her visit that she should thus meet him—and part from him—perhaps finally. The castle was explored wherever there was a promise of interest to lead them, and the walk home in the clear autumnal twilight was a pleasure to each of the party.

Mrs. North welcomed Gerald even more warmly than usual. If there was a little shade of embarrassment as she looked at Eleanor, it may have been that she thought only of her presence being a little too much restraint on Gerald's entire freedom of manner and expression usual to him while among them, but it passed quickly.

After dinner—a more ceremonious one than there had been since Eleanor's arrival—the children came to her with a petition that she would read aloud some particularly thrilling story. Eleanor caught gladly at the pretext, and begging Mrs. North's permission to retire to the children's domain, half school-room, half nursery, she received her hostess's good-night kiss and left the drawing-room.

If Gerald missed her presence, he was careful to make no inquiry after her. A long account of his tour to France and Switzerland while the Norths had been at the sea-side, grave discussions of the threatening temper prevalent in some parts of the country, political news, and lighter conversation in which Mrs. North took part, filled up the evening—the last of Eleanor's visit at North Villa.





CHAPTER XXIII.

NEW TENANTS AT KILROGAN.

ON the morrow Mrs. Moore's car arrived, driven by Peter, man of all work to the widow, and "sister's son" to old Peggy of the "preaching-house." The horse, a good, strong roadster, was Peter's pet; the genteel outside car, in his eyes the most elegant and luxurious of vehicles. "Talk o' yer 'ker-ridges,'" he would say; "shure what're they but tubs for lazy bones to loll in? Och! look at that bewtiful kyar now! Isn't it the very jewel o' a veyhickle for a gentleman to jump off, or a nate-futted young lady to hop up on?"

Hitherto Peter had not been able to boast much of the latter class of occupants, for "th' ould madam," as he called Mrs. Moore, ascended it but seldom; and when she did take her solemn rides abroad, the exercise was not prefaced by much "hopping." But as Peter lifted out Eleanor's small trunk and pushed it into the "well" of the car, and afterward stood and watched the young lady, as, assisted by Mr. North and Mr. Rohan, she took her seat, he felt that at last the "kyar" was "properly furnished." The Irish peasant's eye for beauty is keen, and Eleanor's so impressed Peter that he at once yielded her a reverential homage. His hat was more jauntily set, his whip flourished with a more imposing grace, as, erect and dignified, he

waited to drive off from the door of the "quality."

Eleanor's last morning in the villa had not been as pleasant to her as all the rest of her visit. A nameless something in Mrs. North's manner conveyed the impression to her that, had she gone a day sooner, it would have been all the better for the future of their friendship. Mr. North was just a little "fussy" about the style of vehicle which was to come for Eleanor. It *might* possibly be ridiculous or shabby, and he dearly liked everything about his family and place to be beyond criticism or reproach.

"Why could you not have taken Miss Crawford in the carriage or on our own car?" he said to his wife. "It does not seem hospitable to have had some one else send for her."

Mrs. North replied that it was Eleanor's own arrangement; and as her trunk must also be taken, she had assented to it.

The hostess did not, certainly, repent of the kindness she had extended to Eleanor, but she said within herself that it was just like those stupid men—"always a day too soon or an hour too late. If they had not arrived till the visit was over, everything would have been pleasant."

Only Miss Irwin and the children

showed to Eleanor an unruffled and honest affection. Many promises to come and see her and invitations to return to them were given; and Eleanor felt her heart respond to their open and ingenuous love. For a moment, as she stood in the hall just ready to leave, chance afforded Mr. Rohan an opportunity to speak with her. Mrs. North had gone back for a book which she had left in the drawing-room, and which she wished Eleanor to take with her. Miss Irwin and Georgy were outside on the lawn, tying a bunch of flowers for her.

"It has been an unexpected pleasure, but a very great one, to meet you here, Miss Crawford," Gerald said, coming nearer to her. "Will you allow me the happiness of looking forward to seeing you again before long?"

Eleanor hesitated a moment: the request had been altogether unlooked for.

"I hardly think it likely that we shall meet again, Mr. Rohan," she answered. "This is a visit which I shall probably not soon repeat. My holiday is over for a long time, and work begins in earnest for me now. But," she said, and her eyes softened as she looked at his face, full of feeling and interest, "it has been a happy interval, and I am glad to have seen you again, connected as you are with the memory of my dear father's last days."

Gerald had kept the hand which Eleanor extended to him. "I will not now ask your permission to call on you; only crave your pardon in advance for any step I may take toward continuing our acquaintance."

He had pressed her hand and turned away before she had time to answer. In another minute she had said adieu to all, and, seated on the car, was driven off by Peter, glorious, and feel-

ing himself more than the equal of any of Mr. North's liveried "gentlemen."

Her heart was beating, and her eyes were heavy with unshed tears. She could not help feeling that a possible paradise was behind her, and if not purgatory, certainly a lonely, chill, and bleak path of life before. The home at Kilrogan was an experiment which she felt a little shiver in contemplating. Her school duties, while far from being without interest, could only satisfy the sense of duty faithfully done; but all her artistic desires, her ambition for knowledge, her love of what was beautiful, worthy, and ennobling—sheer starvation lay in wait for these, or just such scanty food as would keep her longings painfully alive.

Peter made many ingenious if furtive attempts to waken her attention and cheer her up a bit, as he told himself "'twas only manners to the young lady, an' she so down-hearted like." But Eleanor was deaf to his apostrophes to the horse, the bad bits of the road, the gorsoons of his acquaintance who would run, barefoot and ragged, a bit of the way beside the car.

In an hour they had entered the old gate of Kilrogan. Nannie stood, with all her loving heart in her eyes, just inside it, and, following to the door, clasped her "darlin' child's" hand in her own two little hard ones as she helped her from the car. Mrs. Moore advanced from the parlor door and shook hands with Eleanor, and Nannie and the new tenant ascended the stairs, followed by Peter carrying the "box," which he placed within the room, prepared with all the forethought of her love and the skill of her active fingers by Nannie for the reception of her idolized mistress.



CHAPTER XXIV.

CLASS-DISTINCTIONS.

IN the house which Eleanor had quitted her absence made but a brief blank. The children missed her most, and Miss Irwin had to call all her discipline into action to re-establish the ordinary routine of study, more or less interrupted by Eleanor's presence. Mrs. North betook herself to her flowers, her embroidery, and her plan of a round of visits among the county people. The impulse of her kind heart and her hospitable nature, which had led her to insist on Eleanor's visit, was, like most impulses, accompanied in its responding action with a slight regret. Might she not have, after all, done the poor dear girl a little injury in thus opening to her the door of "good society" only to make the shutting of it harder to bear?

Eleanor's beauty, her perfect breeding, and really good education had always placed her on an equal footing with Mrs. North when in her presence; but Mrs. North was still a young and handsome woman, and it was impossible for a mediocre and exacting nature like hers to rid itself of a certain jealousy of fresher beauty and higher intelligence than her own.

"Yes," she thought, "she is a lovely, charming girl. If only she were in a better rank, she would be sure to make a brilliant position" ("position"

was equivalent to "marriage" in Mrs. North's lexicon). "Now, poor girl! her very gifts are really so many misfortunes to her. If Lady Stanley had had grown-up sons, I am very sure Eleanor would never have been received in the half-governess, half-friend capacity in which she remained there. Why, if my Jack had been five or six years older I *could not* have brought her here even for this short visit."

And Mrs. North fell into a "rev-erie" upon the dangerous and designing ways of governess nature, ruminated upon her own safety in having Miss Irwin for a permanence, and finally dropped into a gentle little slumber in the depths of her easy-chair, from which she started at the heavy step of her husband entering rather abruptly.

"Rohan and I are going off for a day's shooting, Emily," he said. "Just manage to have dinner half an hour later; for Gerald must leave us tomorrow, he says, and I want to give him a good long day on the hills."

When the two gentlemen returned only just in time for their late dinner, Mr. North, more fatigued than his younger and more active companion, retired to a "rest" on the library sofa. The rest was not long in deepening to a profound sleep, and Gerald thus found the time he anxiously wished

for to speak to Mrs. North regarding his own and Eleanor's future. Although he persuaded himself of her full sympathy in the feelings which he was about to confide to her, her manner to Eleanor that morning had left just a little cloud of uneasiness on his mind, making him all the more desirous of showing Mrs. North the place which Eleanor held in his esteem.

"I was so glad to meet Miss Crawford in your home, Mrs. North," he began. "It was like your kind and thoughtful self to bring her here, when she must have been broken down with grief for her father's loss."

"Oh yes," his hostess answered, "she did seem miserably deserted, poor thing! And Georgy had taken such a fancy to her that I thought it would be nice to have her here for a while. I might hardly have asked her, though, if I had thought she would still be here when Mr. North, and you more especially, were here. I know there is a sort of unpleasant restraint in the presence of a person who is in the first weeks of mourning, and I must say it was considerate of the girl to remain with the children last night."

"You will be mistaken, Mrs. North"—and Gerald's voice was in a graver tone—"if you think that to me there could be anything unpleasant in Miss Crawford's presence under any circumstances. I admire and reverence her more than any young lady I have ever seen."

"Indeed, Mr. Rohan, you are frank in your declaration, and I perceive my wish that she should not have met you in this house was a wise one. You must know that if you had allowed her to divine your sentiments it would have been most injurious to her."

"I should be sorry for that," said

Rohan; "but where would be the injury, my dear friend?"

"It is hardly 'nice'" (Mrs. North's touchstone of a word for all moral, physical, and conventional subjects) "to speak of such affairs so soon after her mourning is put on afresh; but surely you know, for a girl who has to go out into the world to work for her bread, to have her head turned by the admiration of a gentleman in a rank so much above her own, would be most unseemly, and *must* be injurious."

"You may be right in making her recent loss a reason for my concealing my feelings at present, Mrs. North; but just as soon as Miss Crawford will give me the opportunity for revealing them, I shall certainly lose no time in trying if there is any *injury* to be sustained from the knowledge of an admiration as sincere and warm as mine."

"But with what motive, may I ask, would you do so?" Mrs. North queried, a cloud on her handsome face.

"A very simple and old-fashioned one, Mrs. North: to try if I could win her love and her consent to be my wife." Gerald smiled a bright and perhaps a somewhat defiant smile, looking straight into Mrs. North's blue eyes as he made his declaration.

If he had meant to startle his fair hostess out of her smooth content and ladylike self-possession, he had succeeded perfectly. Mrs. North rose suddenly from her easy-chair, then sunk into it again, her cheeks flushed, her eyes flashing.

"Gerald Rohan! it is not possible that you can mean what you have just said—you! who represent one of the best families in the county—who are descended from a noble race, and possess an estate so important—to dream of marrying a girl who actually sup-

ports herself! a daughter of a poor Methodist ranter! Oh, you are jesting! You would never disgrace yourself and your rank by such a marriage."

"We will discuss the question of the disgrace when the marriage is arranged, my dear madam. I certainly have not the assurance to count upon Miss Crawford's acceptance before I have made any effort to obtain it. Meantime I beg to assure you that I can see nothing resulting to me from her possible consent to marry me but honor and most rare good-fortune."

"Teacher in a day-school! without a decent connection in the world!" murmured Mrs. North.

"Nay, did I not hear you kindly encouraging her, in beginning her labor again, by extolling it as the noblest of callings, the fittest and the only occupation for a woman of education to turn to when left to her own resources? And as for her lonely position, surely that is but another claim on every manly and tender feeling of my nature—the nature which I feel I owe to your sex, madam, since it is inherited from my mother." And he bowed low to Mrs. North.

"Your mother! your mother, indeed! What do you think would be her feelings if she could know what you are contemplating? Come, Gerald, confess you are only trying to tease me into a display of temper," she continued, in her softest tones. "How could I bear to see you married—" and the tears glistened in her pretty eyes—"married," she went on, hastily, "to a wife whom it would be quite impossible for me to receive as an equal?"

Gerald bit his lip. His temper was not used to the curb and bridle, and he had restrained it to the very limits al-

ready. His voice was cool and steady, but his eyes gleamed.

"As my dear mother's name has come into our discussion, Mrs. North, I will tell you that it was the need which I felt for such counsel and sympathy, as I should not have asked from her in vain, which prompted me to come to you as I have done. Among the ladies of my own neighborhood, shut into their poor little circle of self-importance and imaginary superiority, I knew I should have to encounter rude disdain and heartless impertinence, in the event of my bringing the lady in question among them as my wife; but I hoped and expected something different from you. Forgive me for intruding my confidences on you, and let me thank you for the lesson you have given me in the cultivation of self-reliance and trust in the dictates of my own heart, and the principles which my mother left for my guidance."

He rose, and, once more quite master of his temper, bowed to Mrs. North and left the room, repairing to the library, where he found his host just awake and ready to resume the discussion of the merits of a new rifle which the after-dinner nap had interrupted.

When, late in the evening, the two gentlemen would have rejoined Mrs. North, they found only Miss Irwin in the drawing-room. She gave a message from the hostess excusing her early retirement on the plea of a headache; so their evening's amusement was reduced to a game of cribbage and a consolatory cigar.

When Gerald was alone to think of his skirmish with his fair hostess, he felt as much mortification at his own boyish open-heartedness as anger at Mrs. North's most unlooked-for recep-

tion of it. In truth, when he first approached the subject, he had not meant to take so decided a position in his expressions toward Eleanor: he felt as if he had inflicted a wrong on the delicacy and honor of his sentiments toward her. But the careless and slighting manner of Mrs. North in all mention of her had stung him into a sort of moral defiance of such cold indifference to Eleanor and her fate. The appeal to her affectionate and motherly nature was all in vain, and showed her, as he thought, to be both heartless and unwomanly.

"Good Heaven!" he said, "how can a wife and mother be so hard and cruel to one in Eleanor's position? And for such a mean, unworthy cause as this imaginary difference in rank! If I were about to propose to Mrs. North's chamber-maid or cook, she could not have been more shocked. As if it needed anything but the mere recognition and politeness due from one lady to another to place Eleanor Crawford on a par with the best of them all! Well, it is a stinging lesson to keep my own counsel henceforth, and to be more wary of the velvet skin which hides the claw."

Now, when Gerald accused Mrs. North of cruelty and unwomanliness, he should have qualified such terms, for, in fact, she was of a perfectly kind and amiable nature when she brought the graces of kindness and tenderness into play for those who were in her

own rank and could be gracefully responsive, or else so far beneath it as to be objects of charity. As long as Eleanor had been to her a friendless orphan, pleasant to have with the children, her sweetness would have overflowed in a dulcet stream; but to have her attractions exalted to a rivalry with her own, to see them actually deluding an "eligible" like Gerald Rohan into serious intentions—this was too much! Her anger, her wounded vanity (for Gerald had touched a vulnerable point when he spoke of regarding her counsels as he would those of his mother), clamored loudly, and silenced the pleading of her else kind feelings for Eleanor.

If the ardent love which Gerald could not hide while he spoke of his sentiments added a sting of jealousy, keen and bitter, to the heart of the wife and mother, who was also a still young and beautiful woman, we will not pry too closely nor judge too harshly, but crush it like a poisonous thing, and hide it away from sight, as she did before she had well perceived its real nature.

Altogether Mrs. North's tranquil stream of life had that evening met with a rude, uncomfortable check. Her headache was no pretext; and as she lay down on her bed, sick and dissatisfied with herself, she doubted, for perhaps the first time, if her existence was to flow on, level, flower-strewn, and sunlit.





CHAPTER XXV.

SETTLING DOWN.

IT was, perhaps, well for Eleanor Crawford that her earlier life, as the child of an itinerant preacher, had prevented that intense attachment to locality which makes it a pain to many natures to change their home. Though her unsettled life had deprived her of the sweet and restful memories which gather round

“The dwelling-place of early youth,
Our first, our dearest home,”

it had compensated by leaving her free from the narrow prejudice, the reluctance to accept new ideas and shake off old trammels of opinion and custom, which, with dwellers in small communities, so often overspread and strangle all mental growth. If Mr. Crawford had been a clergyman of the Church of England, his death would have probably brought to his daughter the keen pang of quitting a home endeared to her by every tie of childhood and youth: a home too, it might have been, of such beauty and comfort that she would not have known how to bear its loss. Now, as she sat down in the quaint but bright little sitting-room, where Nannie was hopping about and pecking Eleanor's things into place and order like a housewifely robin, she felt that, at least, her new refuge had many pleasant features. All the be-

longings to which she attached a value for their own use and worth, or for the associations connected with them, were arranged by Nannie as nearly to her young lady's taste as she could get them. Her piano and books, the little cabinet with her mother's old china and glass, the odd little relics which her father had treasured from the old days of his mother's house-keeping, were there. Among them was a tea-caddy which had held some of the very first tea ever brought into Ireland, and which was long kept and used only in a kind of contraband and mysterious way, for tea-drinking was looked on by the lords of the households then in very much the same light in which opium-eating would be now regarded. There was a little pitcher or jug of ancient form, with a pattern of a strawberry and an edge of gold, which was very precious in Eleanor's eyes, for she remembered it as only displayed on high and festive occasions, and its use was to hold the ladies' beverage of spiced wine or mild punch, which, even among “strict” people, was permissible after holiday dinners. These and other relics, meeting Eleanor's wistful looks in her new home, were like familiar faces encountered in a far-off land: unregarded and commonplace in their native sphere, they took on a

higher meaning and a friendlier expression to the eyes that found all other objects and surroundings strange and foreign. Nannie had also introduced some pieces of furniture which were not among the things she had brought from Erna. A carved and slender spinning-wheel stood in a corner, evidently an aristocrat of its race; a little "spider" table of mahogany, almost black with age, on which stood a lacquered tray with the remains of a delicate china tea-service; a fire-screen, also of Chinese or Indian work.

"Why, Nannie!" said Eleanor, "where did you find these pretty old things?"

"Och! miss, didn't I deludther th' ould madam" (Nannie had adopted Peter's title for Mrs. Moore; it was convenient) "into lettin' me rummage among the hapes o' ould things in the garret above? An' there's lots more, when I get the time to sarch. An' right glad I was to find th' ould wheel again, miss, for it was the misthress's, yer own darlin' mother's, *own*. For I mind well 'at *her* mother tellin' me, an' me a little shlip of a girl, how one o' the young gentlemen, yer uncles, miss, had brought that wheel from foreign parts for the young misthress: an' that table an' the bits o' chaney wor the pride o' yer gran'mother's heart, an' all th' ould silver 'at used to be laid out that grand on it; though there isn't much o' *that* to be found in the garret, sarch or no sarch, I'll go bail."

"Well, Nannie, you must have worked like a little beaver to get the rooms to look so pretty," said Eleanor. "But you had some help, surely—"

"Na, 'deed, thin, I hadn't, miss," said Nannie, with a toss of her little head, "forbye that gowk of a Peter 'ud give a han' now an' thin at gettin' the

heavy things up—uv coorse the carmen lugged the pianny and the rale big things when they came from the house, but Martha's far too gran to put her han' to to help— But isn't it purty, miss, darlin'?" exclaimed the good soul, her assumed nonchalance suddenly overcome by her pride in her work and in her delight at her mistress's approval. "Shure we're well aff to be here, instead o' stuck down in the town below;" and she thought with comfort of how she had, in Eleanor's absence at Mrs. North's, given a sharp rebuff to Miss Riley and Mrs. Quigley, who had come "spierin" at Nannie as to Eleanor's future residence, and hinting at their willingness to "hunt up" lodgings for her.

"My misthress is goin' to her mother's own place," Nannie had replied.

"What! to live at Mrs. Moore's?" interjected the ladies, who were as yet unaware of this piece of news.

"Yes, mem; why not?" said Nannie. "If there's a head o' the house there that doesn't jist belong to it by rights, it's only got *wan* pair o' eyes, an' I'm thinkin' that 'll be as much as Miss Eleanor 'll want over her."

She was just enough in doubt of Eleanor's approval of this sharp-shooting to withhold the repetition of it from her.

The hour of Mrs. Moore's dinner—always three o'clock—had arrived, and Eleanor went down-stairs to the small room adjoining the parlor, which we have noticed before. The food, although exceedingly simple, was abundant and well prepared, for fortunately Mrs. Moore's miserly habits had not affected the affairs of her table. Brought up in the midst of an abundance which never seemed to cost much money, she had never thought

of stinting herself or her household in food, and Martha's cookery was excellent, as far as it went. No appetite, however fastidious, need have turned from her dinners of boiled chickens and bacon, the sweet and delicately flavored mountain mutton, or rich and perfectly broiled salmon or Lough Derg trout.

Mrs. Moore's grinness was a little relaxed in spite of her will. The presence of such a one as Eleanor in the silent old house brought an influence of sweetness and light which "th' ould madam" could not altogether withstand, and Eleanor was only too willing that such intercourse as was necessary between them should be as friendly as possible. She had tact enough to make the conversation, which the hostess exerted herself to sustain, as agreeable as Mrs. Moore's very limited comprehension would permit, and she felt as if an important crisis were safely passed when dinner was ended and she went to her rooms to continue the arrangement of her surroundings.

At six o'clock she was called to tea—a meal which was served on the large table in the parlor. Martha, stiff and formal, brought in the tray, the bright urn, and the "Britannia" teapot (the silver one, in possession of the Moore family almost since such a thing had been used in the kingdom, was not to be used on ordinary occasions).

After tea, Mrs. Moore went toward the great Bible before which Eleanor, on her first visit, had seen her sitting. She stretched her hand to open it, then paused, turned her spectacles in her withered fingers, and said, "If ye wouldn't heve enny objections, Eleanor, I'd wish that ye'd read the portion o' Holy Scripture at night. My eyes

get a blur on them, an' I can't jist make the prent out readily." Eleanor assented, and the small bell was rung for Martha and Nannie to come to family worship. Eleanor read a chapter from the divine Christ-life. Then these four women, each a type of a different class, but all, judged by faith such as Mrs. Moore professed, equal in the sight of the Almighty, knelt at the high-backed horse-hair chairs while Mrs. Moore offered up the evening prayer.

Alas! how little of the spirit of children approaching a loving, trusted parent did her petition contain! Had they been criminals of the deepest dye, deprecating the wrath of a malignant demon, the submission could not have been more slavish, the terror more abject. Nor was that the worst; every vindictive denunciation, every revengeful malediction of David on his enemies, in its personal and misinterpreted meaning, had brought its fierce spirit into Mrs. Moore's "prayers" for judgment against evil-doers, and transgressors of the law. Eleanor's heart could only lift its silent protest against the appeal which, if fitting either for the creature to offer or the Creator to receive, must plunge the guilty in deeper depths of night, and overwhelm the unhappy and timid-hearted with hopeless misery. She shuddered at the perversion of the Christian doctrine to which she must listen; her spirit sighed out a fervent aspiration for light, for charity, and love, and breathed its pity for the mind which could so awfully mistake its relation to the Creator, in the silent repetition of the Divine pity—"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

As they separated for the night, there was an arrangement proposed by

Mrs. Moore, and very agreeable to Eleanor, namely, that Nannie should bring Eleanor's breakfast to her own room.

"I don't always sleep jist that well in the night, and if I drop intil a sleep when mornin' comes, I don't like to have to get up at any set hour."

"Well," said Eleanor, "that suits me very much better, for I am always glad of an hour for reading before my school duties begin, and I like to breakfast quite early."

It was no wonder if Eleanor's dreams that night were full of her mother's presence. She lay for a long time before sleep came to her, looking through the white-curtained little window into the silent moonlight falling on the old garden, where the hoar-frost sparkled on the leafless trees and bushes. Memories of all that her mother had told her of her girlish years seemed embodied — of her brothers, strong and handsome and full of the wild spirit of youth, their quiet mother going and coming in the incessant and innumerable occupations of a house-mother of the olden time; and of the grandfather whom Eleanor could remember having seen when she was a little child, as, a year or two before his death, he had come to visit her mother and father. He was very tall, with a grand form and a face of remarkable beauty even at fourscore, and in Eleanor's childish mind remained as the image of all that was venerable and picturesque in old age.

One after another, these forms, remembered or imagined, glided out of the past, filling the silent vistas of the

spiritual world as sleep shut her from the material one. She was once more a little child in her new white Easter dress, with hymn-book and folded handkerchief and fresh posy in her hands, walking to the Sunday preaching by her father's side. Now she lived over the last weeks of dear companionship with her dying mother, and heard again her warnings, her counsels, her calm review of the mistakes and sufferings of her mental life in its thralldom to a narrow creed, a gloomy faith. Then a moment's glimpse of a smile of unspeakable happiness and peace, beaming on her from the faces of father and mother, was swiftly succeeded by darkness, chill and bewildering, and a vain effort to climb with painful steps a rugged, desolate height. She woke suddenly, and sat up. What was that standing half within the door? A tall figure, gray-headed, dark-draped, and uncanny. Next moment it was gone; but Eleanor felt, with the discriminating sense which distinguishes the most vivid dream from the most neutral-tinted reality, that it was Mrs. Moore's figure, and her deep-set eyes, which had been looking at her with an expression half resentful, half deprecating.

Too much under the influence of sleep and dreams to wonder at the strange visit or question the motive of it, Eleanor soon relapsed into a profound slumber, from which she only awoke as Nannie entered the adjoining sitting-room to prepare it for breakfast, which she brought as soon as Eleanor had dressed.





CHAPTER XXVI.

WINTER WORK AND KITCHEN COUNCILS.

"PETER says he'll get the kyar ready for ye, miss, in a wink o' an eye, if ye'll have it."

"No, no, Nannie; you must not let him bring it: only in wet weather shall I need to drive; and this clear, crisp morning the walk will be just what I want. School does not begin till ten o'clock, and I shall have plenty of time even after my hour of study."

As she set out from Kilrogan, Nannie keeping her company "a bit beyond the gate," health and hope came back to her young heart. The unsullied air caressed her face and lifted her waving hair. Her fears of the new home, the school drudgery, the lonely, self-sustained life, floated away, and left the sky of her future bright with the consciousness of the ever-present, undying love of those whom death had but veiled from her mortal sight to bring nearer to her spirit's ken. Her strong resolve to live out her life to the highest aspiration, the best possibility which circumstance would grant, sent her on her way from the sweet, open breast of nature at Kilrogan to the dingy, mean, and prosaic town of Erna, and to the daily work in Miss Henley's school, which only the satisfaction that comes to the honest mind from duty honestly done kept from being prosaic and commonplace too.

Beginning the winter in such a brave and wholesome spirit, Eleanor found the days passing with wonderful quickness. Keenly as she missed the love and companionship of her parents, and felt the blank of her now unneeded ministrations to them, she so filled up every hour that hardly any time remained for regretful musing. Mrs. Moore had altered her dinner-hour to four, so as to allow Eleanor time to walk from Miss Henley's when she preferred doing so.

This concession, followed by some others trifling in themselves, but meaning much from Mrs. Moore, surprised Eleanor, and made her more observant of certain changes in her aunt since she had come to live at Kilrogan than she might have been had not these changes become apparent in such considerations for her comfort. Her stern puritanism, her hardness and masculinity of character, were undoubtedly softened; her avarice was either more concealed, or diminished. Even the "family prayer" was of a different spirit. Eleanor instinctively chose for the reading such portions of Scripture as were the sustenance and guide of her own faith of light and hope and merciful love. It was impossible for Mrs. Moore to follow these with her former gloomy prayers and hopeless

self-condemnation. And Eleanor also noticed a feebleness and apathy in the old woman which was not justified by her age, and seemed to have come upon her suddenly. She took more interest in Eleanor's society, was less aggressive to Nannie, less exacting with Peter. As for Martha, she had always reigned supreme in Kilrogan kitchen, seldom coming into collision with her mistress, and going her steady round of well-ordered work independently. Eleanor had rather wondered at the absence of Peter from the evening devotion, and asked Nannie why his attendance was not required as well as that of Martha and herself. Instead of giving her answer, we might peep into the kitchen at Kilrogan, where, while Martha and Nannie were "at prayers" in the parlor, Peter sat before a high-piled and comforting fire of black turf, hard and dry. In the *grieshuch* (if our readers can attempt such a formidable word, which only means the glowing embers of the peat mixed with the hot ashes raked to the front of the hearth) some large "cup" potatoes were covered, and undergoing the process which brings their quality, flavor, and wholesomeness to their highest perfection.

This was the tribute of approbation usual from Martha to Peter when he had been on his good behavior, and specially helpful to her in some of the heavier parts of her house-work. "Cups" roasted in the ashes, and mixed milk (butter milk and sweet together), with a pat of fresh butter, were, in Peter's estimation, a supper fit for a king, were it even one of the kings of Ulster, who, everybody must know, were the grandest of monarchs.

Peter listened at the door which led to the hall adjoining the parlor.

"Ay! there they're comin', an' time for thim, though it's only thruth to say that they don't get sich a big dose o' it since the young lady kem. Och! what do they be botherin' thimselves wid the prayin' fur, anyway? Shure there's nayther sinse or rayson in the Protestant's prayers, whin they won't allow that they'll be to the fore whin they want a soft sate in heaven. Musha! it's hard to know, anyway, which is right and which isn't," went on Peter, scratching his head in a maze of theological difficulty.

His father had been a Catholic, and had only married his Protestant wife in the first flush of a youthful flame, which, for the moment, threw all difference of creed into oblivion. The general result followed; old habits of belief reasserted their sway; every succeeding year brought stronger partisan feelings between them; and the bringing-up of the children was a series of moral pullings and pushings, now this way, now that, until, when all hope of any settled frame of mind in the boys and girls was past, a sort of agreement was come to—the boys should go to the father's side, the girls to the mother's. This conclusion was the effect of the arrival in Erna of a Catholic priest more zealous for the safety of his flock and less willing to have so unsatisfactory an uncertainty between the sheep and the goats.

Peter was deeply imbued with patriotism and the reverence for the "ancient, true Church," and consequently felt his eternal interests far more secure in giving entire allegiance to her authority; but, on the other hand, his heart was a very soft one, and nearly every one to whom he was attached happened to belong to the "heretics," and how to reconcile his affections with

the tenets of his Church was, as he phrased it, a "mighty botheration" to him.

Nannie came into the kitchen with her quick, noiseless step.

"Oh, good-evenin' to ye, Nannie," said Peter, gallantly. "I haven't set eyes on ye the day before."

"Na; I can't spend *my* time colloquicin' with people," Nannie answered, shortly. Her *role* toward Peter was conscious superiority, softening into affable condescension at happy intervals. "If ye'd come in to worship, like a dacent Christian, it 'ud maybe do ye more good than lollin' before the fire."

"Och! shure ye know now, Nannie, it's Father O'Dwyer 'ud be bringin' me to book if I done the likes. Ye wouldn't go again' the word o' your own clargy, now, would ye?"

"Is it me 'ud be said or led by mortal man, whether to say me prayers or no?" answered Nannie, wrathfully. "Evenin' me to a poor blin' *Macedonian* like yerself" (Nannie's interpretation of that Biblical people was clearly that they were a nation who went to mass). "But it's jist waste o' time talkin' to ye: ye're all in the dark."

"In the dark, is it? An' what do ye call thim iligant big wax-candles 'at's lit up whin *we* go to our prayers? It's yer musty ould prachin'-house—"

At this crisis Martha entered, in time to stop the argument, now dangerously warm. She came between the heated tempers of the two like an iceberg into the rough waves, cooling them, but utterly unmelted herself. She had long ago frozen stolidly into *her* belief: whosoever would be saved, *would* be saved; whosoever would be damned, *must* be damned, and thank

God for it. Presbyterian and Calvinist to the backbone of her soul, no pitiful relenting, no ray of all-comprehending, inexhaustible love lit up the dead sea of her belief in election and predestination.

"Sit down to yer supper, mon, an' let thae flush quar'ls alone. What does it sinnify what aither o' ye b'leeves? There's One above 'll settle *that*, past you or her's chanderin'" (disputing). "If aither o' ye was one o' the *electit*, there 'ud be some sense in ye spendin' the breath that 'll be ower sune departit out o' yer sinfu' bodies. Lat thae' maitters alone, tak' my advice."

Knowing well that from her decision as to their utterly lost, and therefore in a manner comfortably settled, condition there was no appeal, the two champions laid down their arms and accepted the umpirage of Martha. Peter devoted his attention to the potatoes, now arrived at the acme of "doneness;" Nannie drew her stocking from her great pocket (a separate construction, worn where her dress ceased to hook-and-eye behind, and tied round her waist). The stocking was of fine gray lamb's-wool, just ready for "heeling," and long enough to be caught at its "beginning end" between her elbow and waist. The clever little fingers knitted away, and Nanny's temper and nerves soon felt the quieting influence of the needles. Neither she nor Martha partook of Peter's supper: their cup of dearly beloved tea and buttered oatcake had been discussed just after the evening meal in the parlor. Before long Nannie led up to more cheerful and interesting conversation by inviting Peter to tell something of a memorable visit he had once made to the great city of Dublin; and when Peter had disposed of his supper

in a way which complimented Martha's hospitality and his own appetite, he showed himself not unwilling to gratify Nannie's curiosity.

"Faith, it was me, thin, that wint whin th'ould madam had to go to the great lawyer's in Hinrietta Street. Shure, Martha there has heard tell o' it more nor wanst; but as ye say ye've niver h'ard about the town itself, I'll come over it to ye aisy like.

"The misthress (for I daren't call her anythin' else to her face) med me get up on the Dublin coach an' herself got inside, an' in troth I felt like a turkey on top of a potato crate, it was that onsartain an' cogglesome" (insecure); "but by-an'-by, whin I got used to it and tuk lave to look about me, it was beautiful, rowlin' along the turnpike wid the coachman in front, an' the ga'ard in his iligant scarlet coat, blowin' a tehune at ivery bit of a town we cam to, and the coachman that full o' fun 'at whin he'd see a flock o' ducks runnin' quackin' about the wheels he'd just give the long lash o' his whip wan curl about the neck o' the fattest o' thim an' pull it up as nate as if it was a thout in a sthrame. Well, whin night come on, an' we were stiff enough sittin' on that roost av a place, there we seen a big, heavy cloud hangin' in the sky. 'Now I know ye,' ses I, 'an' I don't require any scholard to tell me ye're Dublin itself!'"

"Pooh!" interrupted Nannie, "how could any omadhaun help knowin' that? Shure, a big city couldn't be mistuk by a natural" (half-witted person).

"Well, niver mind till ye're thravelin' all day an a cockloft yerself, thin

ye'll see if ye're aigual to as much," retorted Peter; but he went on:

"Whin the coach stopped an' th'ould madam an' th' box was safe landed, we got on a shandraydan of a kyar, an' rattled aff til a big inn. An' shure I thought I'd take a rise out o' the town an' jist see what was goin' an. So all alone be meself I set out, an' oh! the saints presarve uz! sich a stramash o' sthrects, an' big houses, an' kyars, an' fellows hallooin' papers an' ballads, an' wan thing an' another! An' the beggars! Impidence itsilf was nothin' to thim! An' it's the very fattest an' strongest o' them comes up to me, an' ses she, 'Och! ye bewtiful young man, ye'll have a soft heart, for ye're jist up from the country,' ses she—how ever on airth she could tell that!—"an' won't ye give us a ha'penny, for the love o' the Lord?" ses the brazen jade, 'for me belly's sthrikin' fire from me backbone wid the hunger,' ses she (savin' yer presence, an' askin' yer pardon for comin' over the vilyan's own words," said Peter, apologizing). "An' before a big shop with the light pow-rin' out o' the windys, there was a big pianny like, an' a fine furrin'-lookin' chap playin' it. Throth, he could play anythin' at all on it, an' a young lady was wid him to pick up the ha'pence. Sure I was jist moidhred wid all the fine sights, an' glad I was to find meself back at the door where th'ould madam was—"

Here Martha, who probably knew that the gist of Peter's story was exhausted, rose and announced that it was high time "all dacent fowk was abed;" so the social meeting in Kilrogan kitchlin was for that evening at an end.





CHAPTER XXVII.

AN ANTIQUE LADY.

WHEN Gerald Rohan rode away from North Villa the morning after his rather stormy interview with its fair mistress, he turned his horse toward Ennismore Castle. He sent his card to the dowager Lady Ennismore, with a request that, if sufficiently well, she would see him for a few minutes. Though he had not seen her since he was a mere lad, when, in company with his guardian, he had called at Ennismore, he was sure the aged lady would remember his name, for his father had been an intimate friend of herself and of the old lord.

Lady Ennismore returned a message begging that Rohan would wait. She was just preparing to make a tour of her greenhouses and gardens, and would join him in the large conservatory, if he preferred going there to sitting alone in the house. This suited Gerald's purpose in coming exactly, and he was busy in examining some wonderful fuchsias and tree-ferns when the dowager entered the greenhouse. Gerald turned to meet a most plain, even rustic-looking, old woman, whose dress was as simple, and bearing as unassuming, as if she were a poor and obscure person. A smile of great goodness lit up and redeemed her otherwise common features. She leaned

on a gold-headed cane, yet had a step wonderfully strong and brisk for her age.

"Well, Gerald," she said, as familiarly as if she had seen him but yesterday, "I'm glad to see you again. You're very like your father. Ah! *he* was a specimen of an Irishman! What are you young fellows about, that one never hears of you showing a bit of the old spirit? The race of gallant Irishmen, be they soldiers, nobles, or squires, is dying out. There's my son, now, Ennismore, mooning his life away in Italy, hanging about painters' studios and old libraries, as if there wasn't just as much beauty and twice the amusement here in his own place. And a fine young fellow like you ought to have been heard of, in the army or some manly kind of life, before now."

Gerald made some fitting reply, chiming with the old dowager's humor. She took him to see all her most precious plants — her graperies and fernery, and then she turned suddenly to him, while a keen look shot from her deep-set eyes.

"Come, now, what do you want me to do for you? Young men like you are not apt to come visiting old dowagers unless they want something."

"I do want something, my lady,"

answered Rohan, frankly; "yet indeed I feel that in thus receiving so kind a welcome from you I am already indebted too much to ask for more. I will tell you just what favor I have boldly come to beg—let me have a basket of your roses once a week."

"Oh, ho! Master Gerald," laughed the dowager—"a lady in the case, eh? Is it serious, or only a little amusement?"

"So serious," answered Gerald, "that I promise to show you the loveliest wife that ever a man wedded, if the whole strength of my will and devotion may ever succeed in winning her."

"Well done, my boy! There spoke a bit of the old stock, and I'll not ask you a single question about her either; for, even if I had the right to do so, it would be unnecessary. Instead of that, I'll turn witch, and tell *you* what she is. She's handsome, she's a lady, she's a pure woman; for your honest eyes couldn't look into mine as they did when you asked for flowers to send her if she wasn't the last; and your face wouldn't flush with pride and love if she wasn't all the rest of my description. So, there's a bit of necromancy and character-reading for you!"

Gerald could not resist taking the good old lady's hand and kissing it fervently, withered as it was.

"She is all that you say, my dear lady," he said, gratefully; "but—" He paused, and then added, "If I should tell you that, though she comes from a stock as worthy and unblemished as yours or mine, it is some degrees lower in the scale of rank, would you withdraw some of your generous sympathy?"

"Rank, indeed! Let those cavil at

it who are in the doubtful grades—neither high enough to be able to bend gracefully, nor sure enough of their own standing to be indifferent to the paltry class-distinctions that in these days have cut up society into a kind of oyster-bed, each enclosed in its own little hard crust. Oh no! I'm willing to trust a Rohan for not setting his heart on a lady-love that isn't his equal, or that won't be worthy to be made his equal in the mere social position. So you shall have the posy where and whenever you want it, Gerald Rohan."

She called a servant to her, and sent for the head-gardener. "Morton," she said, "take the address which this young gentleman will give you, and send a basket of your finest flowers to it once a week." Then, putting aside the thanks which Gerald tried to offer, she brought him back to the drawing-room which has been described before, and where Gerald's hearty admiration and approval of her wonderful piece of inlaying increased, if possible, her satisfaction with her young friend.

"I heard you were here the other day," she said. "If I had known as much about you as I do to-day I'd have received you and your friends; but it would have been an effort to meet my worthy friend Mr. North just that day, besides there being strangers."

Gerald departed, well satisfied with his morning's work. The wounds to his self-love, to his pride in Eleanor, and his feeling of friendship with herself which Mrs. North had inflicted the previous evening, were all healed by the appreciation of this somewhat eccentric but really aristocratic dowager. In what a different light did his love appear in the eyes of each of these women!

Much comforted, Gerald rode on his

homeward way, pleased with his renewed acquaintance with Lady Ennismore, and rejoicing in the thought that he had established a silent but elo-

quent communication with Eleanor until time and circumstances would bring a stronger and closer one within his power.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TESSY PLAYS SPY.

BEFORE we follow the roses from Ennismore to Kilrogan, or watch Nan-nie's pride as she brings them to her young lady, and sees Eleanor's cheek flush as the lovely and rare flowers light up her little parlor, we must once more go back to Rathlinn farm.

The dark, sad days wore wearily on. Norah employed every device which her simple art suggested to divert her daughter's mind from its unhappy pre-occupation, and not altogether in vain. Tessy was no weak-minded and unreasonable, if love-sick, girl; she knew the hopelessness of her passion, and did her best to resist it. She was more than ever devoted to mass, to her prayers, and to the saints' lives, which she read with a vague wonder whether *her* warm, loving heart would ever be frozen into such icy stillness, such entire deadness to all natural human affections. She sought the counsel of her cousin, Winny Moriarty, who had not only had a killing disappointment of the heart, but bore on her broad shoulders the weight of a wild set of brothers and young sisters. She was an orphan, and, being the eldest girl, naturally took the care of the house upon herself. And Winny's great comfort and main-stay was her religion. In the little chapel on the hill-side no figure was oftener seen kneeling at the

foot of the crucifix by the altar than Winny's. She was the often-quoted example of Father Cavanagh, when he wished to point out a *raale* Christian to less devout members of his flock.

One Sunday, as Winny and Tessy went home together from mass, Tessy began to speak of a subject on which they had both often exchanged anxious counsels. It was on the gatherings of the young men in the barn of Moriarty's farm. Winny was supposed to be fully in sympathy with these men and their cause, and generally attended their meetings, although her part in them was only to see to the lights, the drink, and the pipes used at such times. For reasons of her own, Tessy desired much to have the entry to one of these assemblies, and begged Winny to admit her to the barn at the next meeting.

"'Twill be the night, thin," said Winny, in a half-whisper. "I heard thim divils at Cassidy's pass the word for the boys to come to the barn. An' uv coorse the whiskey an' tobaccy is for us to see to—an' me an' the childer without a dacent rag to our back! Sugh an' thim! the dark villains, plottin' and schemin' while the petaties is waitin' to be dug, an' the corn not threshed! But I'll come up wid thim

yet, plaze God, an' take a sphoke out o' their wheel!"

"Winny," said Tessy, "let me go wid ye to-night. Ye know ye gave me yer word ye'd take me sometime, and I don't know whin I'll be able to shlip aff from home again."

"Tessy darlin'," said Winny, "I'm a'most freckened at the thought o' ye comin' among that wild lot. I'm a dale oulder nor ye, and can manage thim well; but a colleen like ye—" She thought a minute. "If ye'd let me disguise ye a bit, now, in me mother's cap and gown, shure they'd niver find out who it was, for the smoke, an' the rush-lights, an' the big, dark barn 'ud hide a saint's glory itself."

"Ye may make whativ'er ye like o' me," returned Tessy, "only get me where I can hear what's goin' on."

When evening came, Tessy, who had asked leave from her mother to stay the night with her Cousin Winifred, began her preparations for disguise. A cap with wide frilled borders, a gown of dark-green stuff, and a plaid kerchief and white apron, made a sufficient alteration in her appearance to serve her purpose. She put her rich, bright hair away under the cap, and rubbed the fine powder of oatmeal over her blooming cheeks. A broad black ribbon was tied across the cap, which shaded her face effectually.

Winny stepped back to admire the effect. "In troth, it's just as if it was me poor mother (God rest her!) was in it," she said. "Ye're nigh hand the same height, and if ye're mindful not to lift the lids o' them bright eyes o' yours, ne'er a one o' them 'ill suspicion ye. Mind, now, an' follo' me close, an' do just what ye see me doin'," she continued, as they went from the house to the barn.

It was a long and rather lofty building, with a part of it roughly floored at the angle of the walls and sloping roof for the purpose of a hay-loft. A few deal tables were placed near the walls, and tallow-candles and rush-lights were stuck in bottles or potatoes hollowed into very primitive candle-sticks. About thirty stout young men, decently dressed in frieze cloth, already occupied the seats at the tables or stood in groups around the barn.

The night outside was dark, and a heavy fog was rapidly condensing into a drizzling rain. Winny brought a small creel, which contained half a dozen large bottles of whiskey. Tessy followed close with a huge brown jug of water, from which she filled smaller pitchers, or "cruishkeens," on the tables; on each table she laid a bundle of clay pipes.

"Winny's got a helper the night," remarked one of the Cassidys.

"Yis," answered Winny, quickly, being near enough to hear the remark; "it's time for me, isn't it? Sorra much help for me 's to be got among ye, I'll be bound, an' I'm fairly run off me feet this day between me duties to me sowl an' me dancin' to this devil's fiddlin'."

Cassidy and his comrades only laughed. Winny's tongue was privileged to say rough truths, for her shrewdness and courage in shielding the meetings from discovery were much prized. Ned Moriarty turned as he heard the wordy skirmish.

"Who's that ould woman wid ye, Winny?"

"Och! is it so early in the evenin' an' ye too blind to know ould Shannagh from Rathlinn?" said his sister, snappishly. "I'm bate out wid yer meetin's an' moidherin's, an' ye needn't wonder if I take a helpin' han' when I can get it.

Lave me alone and mind yer own affairs: they'll be a match, an' more, for all the wit ye have, afore long, I'm thinkin'."

Ned turned away without answering: Winny was evidently in ill temper, and he felt her counsel to be left alone was the wisest he could follow. Tessy, with a feeble step and bent-down head, moved about after her cousin. She took no notice of the re-

marks upon her presence, judging it best to feign deafness. She crept into deeper shade when she saw her rejected lover enter the barn; and, for all her indifference to him, it gave her a pang to see how, in looks and bearing and dress, young Kiernan had fallen from the bright, manly, and tidy appearance of the comrade and friend of her own happier days.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LODGE IN THE BARN.

DENIS seated himself at a table with the Cassidys and Moriartys, and, with a look at Winifred, Tessy took up her position where she could attend to their wants and be within ear-shot of what was said without being much noticed. Quick-witted and keen, she was entirely aware of the danger which she ran and of the delicacy of her ground, for it would have been a lasting disgrace to her, in her father's eyes, if he had known she had stooped to a disguise and to a participation in such a gathering as the present; and she would, for her own sake, be most unwilling that her adventure should transpire. But soon she began to feel more at ease. The men were so absorbed in the discussion of their business, and Tessy had so well kept up her pretense of deafness, that her presence was almost unnoticed, and the flickering light and atmosphere, now dense with tobacco-smoke, left but slight risk of discovery.

As she reached across the table to fill the pitcher, her arm touched Denis's head. She did not start, but her heart

stood still as she heard the name of Rohan linked with a furious curse. Denis was giving the story of the rent-day. He did not tell it untruly or with exaggeration, but even so, it drew forth bitter anathemas of the "tyrant landlords" and denunciations of the "race of the oppressor." The wicked and false doctrines which the two evil-disposed strangers at Cassidy's had spread through the neighborhood had fallen on productive soil in the minds of these young men, intelligent enough to feel and see that there was something of wrong and injustice in their treatment by the upper classes and the landed proprietors, but wanting in the temperate judgment which would give to each his due, and recognize that the sins of the dominated classes confronted those of their masters as ugly, as glaring, and a thousand times more senseless, vindictive, and brutal.

The ignorance which might excuse the crimes of peasants but little superior to the brute creation in intellect, could not here be urged in extenuation. Denis Kiernan and his comrades knew

too well the wickedness of the acts of which they were aware, if they had not yet taken part in them, to reconcile them to their consciences or their otherwise humane and generous hearts. A blind prejudice against land-owners, an insane idea that the land was, or ought to be, their own to possess and enjoy, a determination to get rid of oppressors, actuated the most of the men involved in the "Ribbon" disturbances of the period between the years '40, '51, and '52.

What part the Roman Catholic clergy took in these disturbances will probably never be truly known. Their conduct will be judged, as it ever is, through the individual prejudices of their critics. Unquestionably there were many instances of violent aggravation of revengeful and murderous feelings by the Irish priests; but there were also among them noble examples of devotion to their religion, adherence to the law, and unselfish, earnest assistance to those who strove to maintain peace and good-will. In this class of men, human nature, after all, asserted itself, the individual being answerable for particular actions, and not obligations of class or creed.

As Denis proceeded with his narration of Mr. Rohan's conduct in the matter of the soiled bank-notes, the wrongheaded, impulsive young fellows, losing all sense of the relative proportions of the offense and its punishment, felt that, to revenge this insult to Denis, extermination of the offender was amply justifiable. They each clasped Denis's hand, with a vow to stand by him in "the rightin' of his wrongs," and, in return, bound him by a new oath to cast in his lot with all their enterprises.

Tessy lost not one word of what was

said. As she listened to the account of the paying of the rent, the description which Denis gave of Rohan, his manner and speech, was too graphic and faithful to leave any doubt of its truth, and she felt a pang of wild terror as she realized to what an awful retribution Gerald's momentary ill-temper had exposed him. These cousins of hers were dangerous allies for Denis. They had grievances of their own against the Rohans; they were the neighbors of the old tenant whom Barton had compelled to leave; and now this grievance of Denis's came opportunely, affording a pretext for the expression of their own malice while seemingly espousing his cause.

The meeting was prolonged till a late hour. The unstinted supply of whiskey had done its work; passion, half defined and smouldering, blazed into wild threats and cruel plans against obnoxious landlords, bailiffs, and new-comers. Songs, whose authors had been inspired by a higher patriotism, a more lofty aim, were sung as embodying their own hopes and aims; the fun, the flashes of wit, the grotesque humor, which are at the call of the true Irishman in any and every circumstance, lit up their base and cowardly plans of revenge as on pestilential swamps phosphoric light will dance and glimmer.

At last Winny declared the lights to be nearly consumed, and the whiskey entirely so. She was trying to break up the table groups, and kept Tessy at her side while collecting the bottles and drinking-vessels. In avoiding a falling bench, Tessy unguardedly made a movement more agile and graceful than accorded with her character of old woman. A young fellow, whose hard head had suffered but little from

the deep potatoes, darted forward and caught her, but retained his hold, and attempted to get a nearer view of her face.

"Upon me faith," he said, "that was a tidy jump for a shanbanagh! Hould here a minute till we see if yer eyes could be as lively!"

Winnie's vigorous grasp was upon him before he could touch Tessy's face.

"Hould out o' that this minute, ye bould blagaard!" she stormed. "How dar' ye lay yer impident hand on the poor ould crathur?"

She adroitly seized and swung Tessy behind her as she spoke; but though she kept her voice in a low key, the contention attracted the notice of two or three others.

"By the powers!" exclaimed the first aggressor, "it isn't an ould woman, boys, but a young an' purty one; an' if it isn't a spy o' the cursed *poliss*, we're well off!"

Shaking with terror, Tessy yet managed to keep her presence of mind. Winnie kept her broad, sturdy figure between the now angry and suspicious Ribbonmen and Tessy, whose steps she contrived to hustle and guide toward a small side door in the barn opening upon a turf-rick-yard, just as the youngest of the Cassidys, with Denis beside him, was stretching his arm to bar her way.

Tessy slipped through the narrow opening, jumped to the rick-yard, and under the gloomy shadow of the heaps of turf she fled to the house, and gained Winnie's room, panting, breathless, and half dead of fright. Once assured of her escape, Winnie stood at bay by the door, and there from her vantage-ground of outraged innocence poured forth a volley of scorching sarcasm

and vituperation on "the cowardly crew who couldn't pay a dacent respect to the image o' their own mother," and who dared to cast an imputation on her fidelity to the cause.

Ned, Winnie's eldest brother, came forward. The conviction that the pretended old woman was really a spy had sobered him; for he knew that if this should become apparent to the rest of the wild crew, his own and his sister's position would be most unenviable, and it behooved him to turn away suspicion as well as he might.

"Have done with yer jokes, boys!" he exclaimed. "Shure it's only a wager I laid wid that wild colleen, my sister Maggie, that's as true an' as bound to the cause as e'er a one o' ye. She said she'd defy me to find her out when she once fixed herself up; and bedad! only for the row ye've made, the girleen would ha' won her wager, for I niver misdoubted her till ye frightened her so. Shure ye see yerselves that Winnie even didn't know her, or she'd have sent the little girl to her bed long ago."

The apology or explanation might hardly have satisfied men more in possession of their sober senses; but Winnie seconded it admirably by exclamations of surprise and threats of vengeance on the adventurous Maggie.

The meeting dispersed with the usual result—inflamed passion and befogged intellect—schemes of private vengeance hatched out under the shelter of devotion to the "cause"—idleness and vice claiming immunity from honest labor and ties of duty, to skulk in corners and bring to naught the fruits of honest industry, peaceful lives, and worthy endeavor.

As soon after this daring escapade as Tessy found an opportunity to pen a letter, she wrote to Gerald Rohan:

"HONORED SIR,—I have found out, no matter how, that you have an enemy who will surely do you harm if you are not watchful.

"If I tell you that it is Denis Kieran, I can trust to you to keep it to yourself, for indeed my own life would be in danger if it was known that I told you this. Don't go alone into roads that have trees. Don't go out at night without your pistol ready and

handy, and may God take care of you! Your friend and well-wisher,

"TERESA M'MANUS."

Gerald burned the letter, a little startled and very deeply touched by this daring act of the young girl. He did not entirely neglect taking the precautions she advised, although he did not by any means apprehend all the danger which Tessy evidently feared for him.

CHAPTER XXX.

SPRING COMES TO KILROGAN.

NANNIE might well rejoice in the basket of flowers which came every Saturday morning, a silent pledge of delicate admiration of, and devotion to, her mistress. Eleanor had for a moment supposed that they might be from North Villa; but she soon ascertained the contrary, for Miss Irwin and Georgy had come out to Kilrogan a few days after the arrival of the first bouquet, and by their unconsciousness of her allusions to it had convinced her that they or Mrs. North were innocent of the least part in the sending of it. She could only believe, then, that Mr. Rohan had been the giver; and he would have felt that he could have taken no surer means to keep him pleasantly alive in her thoughts, if he had been present as each week brought the flowery message. Mrs. Moore took no notice, though Martha hinted grimly that such doings were unbecoming to the grave and pious character of the Kilrogan household.

In the long winter evenings "th' ould madam" grew more and more to

look for Eleanor's companionship. It was a new spiritual atmosphere for the lonely, hard, and narrow woman to breathe; for while her niece fulfilled even her strict requisitions of industry and grave propriety of demeanor, her strong and bright faith in the goodness of God, the loveliness of all he had made, and his tender kindness and pity for his imperfect, erring children, brought a light over the gloomy Calvinism of Mrs. Moore's thoughts and fears which had never before crossed it. She grew more talkative, and more ready to accept Eleanor's brighter view of many things in the Bible which had hitherto been but the terrors of the law to her. But at times a great nervous depression overcame her. She lost her appetite and her interest in the farm; even her love of money seemed to lose its keenness. Although with evident effort, she went every Sunday to meeting or to church, where a young and earnest man was filling the place of the old rector, who was now, after a life which he had, satisfactorily to him-

self, spent in hunting, high living, and attendance on "good society," sinking into his dotage. Thither Eleanor accompanied her, sure of hearing at least the beautiful service beautifully read, and a sermon compiled with good taste, learning, and a sincere desire to do good.

The Rev. Mr. Smiley had not failed to call on Eleanor after her removal to Kilrogan, but her coolness and Mrs. Moore's gruff manner gave him but little encouragement to repeat his visit. From the rest of the Erna brethren and sisters the distance of her abode kept Eleanor happily safe. Indeed, she felt every day a deep content in the peace which surrounded her life. Fully occupied and more and more interested in her work of teaching, in which Miss Henley gradually allowed her to follow her own methods, she lived day by day on the bread of life which came to her from the Father's hand. Young, busy, useful—it was her religion to live in the labor which is prayer, the duty which is service, the enjoyment of existence which is praise. For the future, hidden as it is from every human ken, she had no care and no selfish, enslaving fear. Hers was a small sphere, rounded to perfection, and touched with the heavenly light of a possible coming love, which infused the neutral tint of her homely, prosaic life with a glow of color and a vital warmth.

The gray, autumn days melted into long, severe rains; sunlight seemed to have forgotten the earth. Then came sharp frost, light snows, and December and January were over, and in the sheltered nooks under the thorn hedges peeped out the first primrose. Eleanor, returning from her school one day, saw it, and her heart leaped with delight,

while a flood of tender recollection rolled over her. Her father had always brought home the very earliest primroses and fastened them in her mother's breast. She knelt on the green turf, and kissed the pale blossom as devoutly as if it were a messenger from those dear ones, feeling them at that moment very near. Surely if the earth, so dark and heavy, could reveal a flower like this, the clear, soft air was not too dense to let *them* come close to her, however fine and ethereal might be their spiritual bodies. At least, it was a comforting and consoling thought, and Eleanor was not apt to reject such. As she rose, with the little flower, like a star in its setting of broad leaves, in her clasp, she heard the sound of a horse's feet, and in another moment the rider, Gerald Rohan, had dismounted, and was at her side. Eleanor, striving hard to keep down the hot flush which she felt dyeing her face, answered his impressive greeting.

"It is almost too fortunate that I should find you here," he said. "I doubted whether I should see you yet at home, for I know your mornings are spent in town, where I would have gone to meet you; but I wanted so much to come to this home of yours. Will you let me come in and sit a while? My poor horse is so tired he ought to have a rest."

Eleanor looked at the handsome, spirited animal, but could see very little sign of fatigue in him. Gerald laughed consciously as he saw the look.

"Well, at least, Miss Crawford, you will not deny that, after a ride of forty odd miles since yesterday morning, *I might* put in a plea for a half-hour's rest."

"I am surely not so inhospitable as

to refuse it to you, Mr. Rohan," said Eleanor, with a bright smile; "and if you are not afraid of a somewhat grim old lady and a possibly cool welcome from her, you, as well as your horse, shall have full time to rest. But," she went on, "have you not come from North Villa? You surely did not pass your friends there?"

"Yes, I passed them by, or, rather, I did not pass there to-day, for I have just come from Ennismore, where I stopped to thank the good old lady there for a charming favor she has done me this winter."

Eleanor looked at him, though she felt the provoking red rushing into her cheeks again. It was useless to ignore the flowers, which she had long ago found out were always from Ennismore.

"I have to thank *you*, then, for the lovely nosegay which has brightened my table all winter. It was a most kind thought of you."

Gerald was enchanted at such simple, straightforward acknowledgment; and how pretty the old-fashioned word "nosegay" sounded from her lips!

"Ah, but I deserve no thanks; you must give them to the dear old Countess of Ennismore. Some day you shall see her."

He checked his impetuous words, feeling that he was going far in advance of the intimacy so new between them yet. Eleanor did not answer, for they had already come to the door of Kilrogan Cottage. Nannie opened, and had to keep down a little crow of delight as she saw "the fine young squire" standing with her darling mistress. Mrs. Moore was in her accustomed seat by the parlor window. She looked up, and Eleanor saw in a moment that the presence of Mr. Ro-

han was not pleasing to her; but her hospitality was enough to draw from her at least a show of welcome, and Gerald put on his most courteous and ingratiating manners for her conquest. She was a harder and less impressionable subject than he generally met, however, and barely kept her looks and words from being forbidding. Peter, summoned by Nannie, had taken Mr. Rohan's horse, and brought him round at the end of the hour into which the visit had been prolonged, with the touches of perfect grooming which only the hand of a master in the art can bestow.

Gerald rose to go, announcing very decidedly his intention of calling again if the ladies would permit. He had a new book, and a new rose just sent to him from France, of which he knew they would like to have a cutting. No positive acceptance came from Mrs. Moore, but, contented with her tacit consent and with the light in Eleanor's face, he took his leave.

"Aunt," said Eleanor, as she sat by Mrs. Moore's work-table that evening, busy at a cap with which she had persuaded her to replace the ancient fabric of black net, "was it unpleasant to you to receive Mr. Rohan's visit to-day?"

Mrs. Moore looked at her questioner in surprise. She was getting used to Eleanor's honest outspokenness, but on this subject she had expected more reticence and shyness.

"Weel, Eleanor," she said, after a little pause, "I'm not just used to such fine sparks comin' to the hoose here, an' I did *not* look for yerself to tak' up with a pairson in Mr. Rohan's rank. Ef he's the maister o' Annadale, he'll hardly be lookin' to sich plain people as us for friends, let alone a wife; an'

I hope ye think too much o' yer own good name to—"

Mrs. Moore did not finish the sentence, for Eleanor raised her eyes with a sudden proud look which more than answered the old woman's suspicious "spierin'."

"If Mr. Rohan happens to be in a class a little above us, and has had ancestors a little more elevated in rank than mine," she said, "I cannot feel that such slight distinctions should hinder a pleasant acquaintance between us. I don't think his manner to either of us showed any sense of superiority, and I am sure I have never felt myself unworthy of the society of any one who is truly a lady or a gentleman. Neither from my mother nor my father did I learn to abase myself before the petty differences of rank and wealth."

"Weel, weel! tak' yer own way," said Mrs. Moore. "I'm sure I'm not the one to hinder ye from makin' a good match, an' the young man seems weel enouch."

Eleanor was too wise to answer with

the sharp retort springing from her irritated sense of maidenly delicacy. "A good match!" The old madam could hardly have found a phrase more repugnant to her ideas of love and marriage, and every pure and unworldly thought linked therewith; but she knew too well that her aunt had never looked on the relations between youth and maiden save as matter of speculation for a good settlement in life, or else as those between victim and betrayer. She might as well have talked French or Italian to the old madam as spoken her own thoughts about the sacred flame of love. Besides, Eleanor was grateful that her aunt had behaved so well to their visitor; for, indeed, she had feared her reception of Rohan would have been more uncouth than it was. The evidently broken health of Mrs. Moore, too, was making Eleanor more patient and tender with the nature once so strong and self-reliant, now daily appearing more dependent on her, and less harsh and domineering.





CHAPTER XXXI.

ELEANOR HEARS SOME NEWS.

A FEW nights after Gerald's visit, Eleanor again dreamed the same dream which had come to her the night of her arrival at Kilrogan. Again she went through the struggle to attain some unattainable height, and woke with the same sense of trouble and danger; and there, again, stood the tall figure within her room. This time, though, it did not turn and vanish, but advanced and showed her aunt's face, worn and troubled, but with a feverish light burning in the deep-set eyes.

"Eleanor, my side an' my heid's very bad, an' there's a somethin' come over me that's made me come this way to ye, dead o' the night as it is. Will ye get up an' come to my room? I must say somethin' to ye while I've the strength o' mind an' body to do it."

She shivered, and drew her heavy shawl close round her. Eleanor rose immediately, put on some clothing, and followed the gaunt figure to the large bedroom where her aunt slept. There was a little fire yet burning in the grate, and its light, with that of a dim candle, was sufficient to show them the way. Eleanor assisted her aunt to the bed, made the pillows easy for her, prepared some tea and made her drink it; then she drew the old easy-chair to the bedside, and, seating herself, took the old woman's hand in her own, and waited, hoping she would sleep.

After a little time Mrs. Moore opened her eyes, and looked long at her—a different look from that which Eleanor remembered on that first night, for in it were now mingled affection and a sort of fear.

"I might as well tell ye the whole story, Eleanor," she said. "Ever since ye've come under this roof it's been hangin' over me that I be to do it" (compelled to do it, she meant), "an' somehow things are a' changed like to me. My hidin', an' plannin', an' savin' don't look warth so much, though I did it believin' it the Lord's will, an' 'at it 'ud be to the good o' his cause if I could lave all till the Church."

She reverted to the old self-delusion and fraud upon her conscience. Eleanor was silent, wondering what was coming, but thinking it some feverish vagary of the old woman's mind.

"Maybe it's to Nannie herself I ought to tell what I'm goin' to say," she went on; "but sho's a feckless, impident body, an' wouldn't have the sense to know how to take it. Ye'll do what is best and right anyway, Eleanor, an' keep canny an' quiet. I can trust ye—

"When yer uncle David Moore asked me for his wife, he didn't know that I knew so much about him as I did; for I had found out by askin', an' watchin', an' puttin' this an' that

together, that the child of Ally Humphries, born in this house a couple of years before I came to it, was David's child. The mother died when she was born. I knew why your grandmother, a soft-hearted, foolish woman, as I thought, had tended the death-bed of the girl so anxious, and afterward took such care of the orphan baby; but I didn't know till my own child was born and my husband dead that Ally was his lawful wife. They had been married in secret, an' only when the young mother was dyin' did he tell *his* mother the unfortunate story.

"He left a letter for me, Eleanor—a letter that angered me and hardened me, even with him lyin' cold in his grave; for I knew by it, what I had long enough suspected, that it was but little of his heart he'd given to me all our married life. Not that the letter said that; but he mourned so for the destruction of Ally's life, as he called it, and put it so strong before me that the child should be brought home to share with *my* son, that I took a deep vow I'd never do it.

"Weel, ye know now how the Lord punished me, an' took my son, the pride o' my life, away. Even then I couldn't bring myself to send for the girl. She was with yer mother, a servant, not fit to put in the place of my son. When yer mother came back again to Erna, I might ha' done more for her and showed more kindness to ye all, only for that Nannie bein' with ye; and then, in a way that always looks to me now as if I had but little to do with it, ye were brought to this old home of yer people, an'—what was surely the Lord's own way o' revengin' himself on my stiffneckedness—the child I'd kep' away from me all these years came as if it was a simple and natural thing. I gave

in, Eleanor—I gave in that God was stronger than me, an' I had no more to say about it. Ye've been a comfort an' a new life to me, Eleanor, I'll say that; an' if the place was to go to *you*, my mind would be at rest."

She stopped, much excited and suffering, for a hoarse cough, which had troubled her for a day or two, grew frequent and painful.

"Why shouldn't it, Eleanor?" she whispered. "No soul alive now knows that Nannie is David Moore's daughter, except maybe old Peggy, and one or two more not in the country, an' *they* don't know about the marriage." She looked eagerly at Eleanor, the old grasping, selfish fiend peering from her eyes. "Sure *you* have the right to it, for yer mother never got a shillin's worth o' all that her mother saved an' kep' for her, an' now it'll all go—all," she wailed—"to that light-headed, ignorant crature, unless ye'll let me put ye in the will, Eleanor, an' no one the wiser."

Eleanor put her hand gently on her aunt's mouth. "Hush, hush!" she said; "you do not know what you are saying. Would you leave me the same miserable burden of wrong and concealment that has spoiled your own life? Does not some of your reading in the Bible come back to you now? Where is the good of the possessions that would rob me of my own soul—my only divine heritage?"

"Ay, ay," murmured the old woman. "True enough, dear: What shall it profit to gain the whole world and lose the soul? Is mine lost, d'ye think, Eleanor?" she asked, in a loud voice. "Must I give up all here, an' go to hell to burn forever?"

Eleanor started up, horrified. Here was the orthodox religion, with its el-

evation and comfort! And all the time, the old love of the poorest part of life was unsubdued in the poor, dark soul.

"Oh, aunt! poor aunt! do not talk so—do not feel so! Think of all you have lost in your life—the love of grateful hearts, the delight of doing good, the sweet gifts of God that you have robbed yourself of and shut yourself away from. Wasn't that your hell, your punishment? And all the time God was trying to bring you back to peace and light. What a help poor Nannie would have been to you, if you had let her be your child! And my mother, too—you might have saved her life if you had not so hardened yourself against us. Oh! pray—pray

that you may be made sorry, grieved, heart-broken enough for God to come and comfort you, poor, wandering, mistaken heart!"

She checked herself, for she saw that the sick woman could bear no more. The tears rolled down the furrowed cheeks; her breath was loud and hard-drawn. Eleanor kissed and soothed her, and did not leave her till she had seen her in a sleep, disturbed and feverish, but still a respite from the trouble of mind and the suffering of the body. Then she called Martha to take her place while she returned to her own room to take a few hours' sleep, putting aside as well as she could the strange revelation which Mrs. Moore had made to her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SICK-ROOM.

ON entering her aunt's room, next morning, she found her seriously ill; a sharp attack of pleurisy held her in its grasp. The Erna doctor was sent for, and he pronounced her in great danger. There was nothing for Eleanor to do but give up everything to the duty of nursing the helpless and suffering woman. When the disease had run not only its course, but the terrible treatment of blistering, bleeding, and drugging which the enlightened medical science of the day prescribed, reducing to a minimum the chances of life in every disease, Mrs. Moore still lived. But the constitutions of the generation of which we write were made of sterner stuff than that which

goes to make up the punier races of to-day, and out of the fever, and pain, and torment of her illness old Mrs. Moore dragged a feeble remnant of life. Although Eleanor dared not openly combat the administration of powder and pill, she had thought it no wrong to withhold when she could those drugs which she saw increased the suffering and trouble; and with unceasing watchfulness, and a gift of skilful nursing with which she was endowed, she fought the deadly disease.

At last, when March had departed, with the three "borrowing days" which that bitter and unkind month habitually filches from its milder successor, flinging them at random as it turns to

leave the rejoicing land, Mrs. Moore crept from her room to sit in the sunny window for a little while—each day a little longer, when, Eleanor having taken up her daily duties at the school, her aunt's chief business was to watch for her return.

The well-spring of affection, sealed even in the days of wifehood and motherhood, was opened in the old woman's heart. The strength and honesty of Eleanor's character had won her respect, and the tenderness and devotion with which she had nursed her had at last softened the hardness of her nature. The expression of such affection it was now too late for her to learn; only in many little acts of thoughtfulness for her niece's comfort did she show the new, divine birth of love, stunted and imperfect, but yet with the immortal spark shining through.

To Eleanor, so isolated from all ties of relationship, this feeling, the outgrowth of her own unselfish goodness, if she had so recognized it, was most welcome. It was a new interest to her to feel herself the guardian of the feeble, delicate woman; to take charge of her dress, making her, with soft pretty laces and woollens, into a mild and benevolent old lady, instead of the "griffin" which Mrs. North had once truly called her; to read to her books which she could understand, and which replaced the terrors and denunciations of her distorted "religion" by images of human lives of love and hope and faith, which through all time have fed the flame of the altar of the living God.

Gradually Eleanor found means to bring Nannie more in contact with her aunt. Nannie, all unsuspecting of the lot in store for her, still criticised "th' ould madam" sharply enough, although even her resentment was not proof

against the new gentleness and dependence which her illness had brought into the old woman's manner. While Eleanor was busy at school, and Martha occupied in her many household matters, Nannie sat with Mrs. Moore and read to her. Often interrupted the reading was by her own shrewd comments and Mrs. Moore's replies. The old disputatious tendencies, as they became less personal, appeared in full vigor in the discussion of people and doctrines; and the excitement of this wholesome exercise had not a little share in restoring Mrs. Moore to health—such health as she could ever hope for or expect in the years still remaining to her.

Since the night when Mrs. Moore had told Eleanor of the true relation which Nannie bore to them, there had been nothing further said on the subject, only Mrs. Moore had handed her niece a bundle of letters, yellow and faded. In it were one or two of Mrs. Crawford's to her sister-in-law; some from the son whose fair career had closed so suddenly; and, tied with a black ribbon, the letter of David Moore of which her aunt had told her. The quaint, formal phraseology of this had, in its effort to touch the heart of his stern wife, something which seemed to Eleanor deeply pathetic. It detailed clearly enough his love for and marriage with Aileen, the young girl whom his mother had taken from a lowly home, and, for her prettiness and her pleasant ways, made more a companion to herself and her daughter than a servant. But David Moore lacked the courage and the honor to take her openly for his wife, and so had resorted to the always mean, generally disastrous, expedient of a secret marriage. Eleanor, after reading the letters, would have returned them to Mrs. Moore, but she

put her hand out to repel them. "Keep them, Eleanor; keep them, child," she said, "an' let me think that I've some-

body to take the weary weight that they've been to me aff my old shoulders."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ELEANOR'S VICTORIES.

Now, it was Eleanor's chief thought to do what was possible toward placing Nannie in her proper position in the household. By almost imperceptible degrees, little changes in dress, little marks of confidence in and nearer companionship with her faithful handmaiden, she tried to push her a little forward toward social equality; yet it was not so easy, for Nannie's reverence was a part of her nature, and to overstep the line of demarcation between "mistress and maid" was out of the range of her present possibilities.

Eleanor more than ever congratulated herself on her determination to make Nannie "a good reader," an accomplishment by no means usual in women of her class then. She had herself begun to teach Nannie, and after she had left home for school had begged her mother to continue the task. Nannie's progress in writing had not been brilliant, so Eleanor again began instructions in that art, leaving her a "copy," to be ready for inspection at her daily return from school. Wary and guarded as was Eleanor in her efforts for the development of Nannie's powers, the little woman noticed them and wondered what Miss Eleanor meant. Finally, she made up her mind that she was being fitted by degrees for entering on the sphere to which the young mistress

would naturally bring her when she accepted Mr. Rohan as her lord. Thereupon she set herself to second zealously all Eleanor's designs, and indeed, by the time the summer had come, was, in dress and manner and speech, altogether improved—fit and ready to replace the present mistress of Kilrogan when the time for her accession should come.

So this was the peaceful victory which Eleanor Crawford had won over her unfriendly circumstances: the grim old woman, from whom she had been so repelled, changed into an object of real affection and filial care; Martha, tenacious of authority and always, at first, on the defensive, propitiated by the most delicate tact and wise concessions; Peter—but he had been from the first the most devoted slave of her lightest wish; Nannie tacitly accepted by her yet unknown stepmother as the rightful inheritor of the possessions from which she had been kept so long, and Eleanor's own heart and hands right royally filled with the blessed gifts of work and love; for once every fortnight now she knew that in the sweet, warm air of the summer afternoon Gerald Rohan waited to meet her on her return from Erna. His horse, attended to by Peter, was led to the stable at Kilrogan, where he waited contentedly till his master had

finished the long stroll through the lane—the blooming, perfumed lane over which the laburnum and the hawthorn threw their fairy shade—had walked back with Eleanor to the old parlor, now brightened by many a womanly device of prettiness and freshness—had sat after tea in the “gloamin’,” while Mrs. Moore, no longer dragon-like and crusty, but pleased with Rohan’s deference and attention, sat knitting or half dozing in her chair; and then, after whatever form of adieu

most delicate, most chivalric, most lover-like, the fairest and sweetest of my readers can imagine, he mounted the acquiescing and approving steed, and rode away through the dewy stillness round Kilrogan, past dark, sleepy, stuffy Erna, on the road to his lonely home in Annadale, no longer shunned by him or repellent, since now in every room he could picture Eleanor’s lovely, happy face chasing its shadows and filling its loneliness with life and light.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GERALD FINDS WORK.

AND on his estate of Annadale, what had Gerald Rohan been doing all the past winter and the spring? After the unpleasant meeting with McManus, and the still more disagreeable encounter with Denis Kiernan, the young landlord roused himself to take personal notice of all that was transpiring among his tenants. His discoveries were not cheering. Neglect, idleness, waste, and riot met him too often, when a real inspection of the small farms showed him the truth lying beneath a surface which he had been easily made to think indicated fairer conditions. He at once gave up his idea of spending the winter in England, and undertook the stewardship of Annadale himself, only in complicated and perplexing cases sending for Brian McManus, upon whose honesty and practical good sense he was sure he could rely. He found that not only were the farms on his estate too small and overworked to afford decent subsistence to their hold-

ers, but that they had, with the imprudence and want of foresight which probably attains its extreme point among the Irish peasantry, been subdivided and relet, perhaps for the accommodation of some “gorsoon” or “colleen” of the family, who took it into his or her wise head to marry “early,” and set up house-keeping in a cot hastily put up on an acre or two portioned off the farm. Thence came the extreme poverty, the over-population, and deterioration of these farms.

Searching for information and direction at every available source, Gerald found that some of the noblemen who owned immense estates, sorely burdened with their inordinate proportion of paupers, were already discussing the plans of free emigration which were afterward so extensively and so beneficially carried out. Gerald took the hint, and in the smaller area of his inheritance he soon found out the subjects who were most in need of such

transplanting. To them he sent Brian, knowing that his representations would be more readily accepted than his own, with offers of free emigration to the States, to British America, and even, in a few cases, to Australia.

To raise means for this was indeed a difficulty; but Gerald found that the money saved by his remaining at home would form no insignificant part of what was necessary for his purpose. And if, as in his reverie on that Michaelmas-eve he had for a moment fancied, his mother's spirit, with counsel and love, were once more around him, no better lessons could she have found to reclaim him from his life of selfish indifference to the fate of those poor people than those he learned, while striving to bring order and thrift to his estate.

Before the winter closed in, many of the poorest, or the most hopeless and embarrassed, tenants had emigrated. True, the young landlord's enemies were quick to raise the cry of tyrannous and compulsory ejection; but Rohan had such men as McManus and the elder Kiernan, and a few others of worth and standing, zealously working with him, and he passed by the attempts of his ill-wishers without notice. Meetings, such as that already described, of the turbulent spirits of the county were also brought to his knowledge, and, alone and unaided as he was, Gerald could only trust to time

and the counteracting influence of his own efforts to dispel the animosity of young Kiernan and his comrades.

Steadily, all through the dreary, lonely winter, he worked on. Wherever it was possible to pull down a wretched hut, where, perhaps, a family of four or six had made a shelter which a well-conditioned hound would disdain, he did so, and either replaced it with a decent habitation, or, its dwellers being gone, erased the last token of it from the soil it disfigured. Wherever he found a struggling but worthy tenant to whom the loan of money for stock or improvements would be the saving of his self-respect, his industry, his life itself, Gerald advanced it.

It was slow work: he knew the secret societies were still going on; the farms were still too small, too crowded, too much burdened by long years of mismanagement to answer promptly to the better influences of Gerald's new policy. But at least he had taken hold of things at the right end—the opening was made, the light admitted; and when the earliest signs of spring greeted his eyes, his mind was also cheered with the hope of better things among the people over whom he was learning to exercise, wisely and efficiently, his power as owner and lord of the soil. And then it was that he had said to himself, "Now I may go and see Eleanor Crawford."





CHAPTER XXXV.

LOUGH DERG.

THERE is a little drawing from nature on which I look at this moment; and though it is a mere sketch, slight and unfinished, it brings before me again the scene from which it was taken long years ago. Low-lying, purple-gray hills, met and half veiled by a soft sky, all cloud save where a few spots of faint blue open out of the thinner vapor; beneath these hills a green bank and an island, where a ruined church and a round tower give evidence of the long battle with time and the elements which they have survived, sore-beaten, but still upright and defiant; in the foreground a rude building surmounting a rough pile of rock, where stands a group of peasant pilgrims waiting to be ferried to the island in the little flat-boats moving across the shadowy, still water.

It is a suggestive sketch, and brings to my vision Lough Derg as I saw it on a gray, showery afternoon a dozen summers since—the holy island in the “Red Lake,” as its name signifies. It is in the County Donegal, hidden away in a wild, uncultivated tract of country; but in the season thither flock thousands of pilgrims, devotees of the Romish faith, with the obligations of penance to perform—sins of omission and commission to expiate by prayers multiplied and repeated on lowly bent

knees, on which they make the circuit of holy well, and cross, and grave of saint. Wild and untaught, save by the counsels of their priests, they come in simple faith, hoping, in their childish, superstitious minds, that here they may get rid of their sins and find grace and pardon in advance for such as they shall in future commit.

Save for a sprinkling of a few of the decenter class of farmers and their wives and children, almost all are of the extremest poverty. They travel, on feet seldom shod, from even far-off counties to this famous “station.” The pilgrim needs no “scrip” with his staff, for every peasant’s house on the road is opened to him without money and without price, unstinted in hospitality, no matter how frugal and lowly. Arrived at their Holy Lough, they are lodged by people who have the charge of the station, and to each is assigned a sort of cell where the pilgrim remains during the fulfilment of the penance. Through the night watchers make the rounds of these cells, knocking at each door with words of admonition to prevent the *voteen* from giving way to rest or slumber. It is a form of worship quite widely differing from the graceful bending in an æsthetically furnished church-pew. It is slavish in its superstition, as much so as the in-

fluence which makes a modern pillar or deacon of a fashionable church compound his operations in the stock exchange with a liberal donation to the huge debt of the splendid temple, or comfortably salve a business "advantage" taken of a fellow-trader with an ostentatious contribution to the pastor's bronchitis-alleviating voyage. But perhaps the poor pilgrims of Lough Derg get as much consolation for their hearts, as much remission of their sins, out of *their* religious performances, with the additional grace that somehow follows self-sacrificing and sincere, if misguided, action.

The road which passed the gate of

Kilrogan Cottage led to Lough Derg. Nannie often stood in the garden watching the pilgrims, as, with prayers loudly-repeated in unison, they crowded along in the warm July days. Sometimes, forgetting her stern disapproval of the "Macedonians," and remembering only her soft, human heart, she stretched her kindly hand with the noggin of milk or the quarter of oat-bread to a *dawshy*, tired-looking woman or girl. For Nannie had the run even of Martha's kitchen and dairy now; she was free to do what she would not have dared to attempt on her first arrival, and made a generous use of her privileges.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ELEANOR'S VACATION.

It was Eleanor's vacation, and she had gone for a short visit to her old employer and friend, Lady Stanley, who had now returned, with her family, from her foreign tour.

"I hope ye'll enjoy yer visit, Eleanor," said Mrs. Moore, "an' that yer fine friends won't make ye unwillin' to come back to Kilrogan an' the lonely ould body here."

There was an appeal in the voice of the old woman which Eleanor could not but notice, and she promised that a week should be the extent of her absence.

Since her visit to Mrs. North she had never been at the villa, though Miss Irwin and the children had come to see her a few times, bringing a civil message from the lady of the house. Now Eleanor thought she had better

go to say good-bye before the summer separation, and offer to bear Mrs. North's commands and commissions to the Stanleys. Peter accordingly arrayed himself with peculiar care, and brightened the car and its steed to the utmost pitch of gentility; but the latter moved him to strong language:

"'Tis ruined intirely ye are with good tratement, ye unconscionable ater! the fat o' ye's a burnin' shame to beauty. If I don't get th' ould madam to let me put ye in the field, I'm not the godfather av ye any longer!"

Eleanor found Mrs. North in the sunny drawing-room, sunny and fair herself as usual, with perhaps a tone in her voice a little nearer approaching to harshness, a look in her eyes more discontented and less beaming than when she had parted from her eight or nine

months ago. She was occupied in giving directions for packing for their stay at the sea-side, and the children, released from daily lessons, were also making selections and assortments of toys, games, and implements suitable for digging in the sand and other sea-shore amusements.

Eleanor made the general preoccupation and disruption a pretext for shortening her stay. She still felt grateful to Mrs. North for the affection and hospitality shown to her at the time of her great grief; but she could not but be sensible that Mrs. North's manner was chill and formal. She sent some kind verbal messages to the Stanleys; and Georgy and Miss Irwin had a package of small presents of their own pretty work for the juniors of the family, which Eleanor willingly took charge of. While on her way to make this call, she had debated within herself whether to mention Mr. Rohan's visits to her, knowing pretty certainly that the Norths would not be unaware of her having received them; and she had decided that if she should not speak of Gerald, it would be too much like the intriguing spirit of concealment which she abhorred.

"I have seen you so seldom, Mrs. North," she said, "that only for Miss Irwin and Georgy and Mr. Rohan's telling me of your inquiries, I might have feared you had quite forgotten me."

"Ah! yes;" and Mrs. North's little laugh was hard and bitter. "I was charmed to hear that Mr. Rohan had found his way to Kilrogan. He is fond of the study of character, I've no doubt, and is interested in watching the softening influence of youth and beauty on such a subject as your good aunt. Perhaps, too, his mother's old liking for the people of your persua-

sion is inherited, and leads him to keep up his acquaintance with his friend the Methodist preacher's daughter."

Even Georgy, young as she was, felt the impertinence of her mother's manner, for she spoke up warmly: "You know, mamma, Mr. Rohan always does speak of poor Mr. Crawford as if he thought so highly of him. And I quite agree with him that it is only just what he ought to do, to go and see dear Miss Crawford when he comes here."

Mrs. North turned impatiently to Miss Irwin. "Can you not teach this great girl to speak less and think more?" she said. "It is quite intolerable when young people think themselves at liberty to intrude their opinions."

Eleanor sat still, her sense of wounded feeling helping her to keep an unmoved countenance. Georgy's interruption had relieved her from the necessity of replying to Mrs. North's more than unkind remarks, and she took leave without giving her the malicious satisfaction of having disturbed her self-possession.

The limits of our story will not permit us to go with Eleanor and make the acquaintance of the Stanleys. The welcome which she received was cordial and sympathetic. Her pupils hugged her with unqualified fervor, since even the slight formality imposed by her tutelage of them was now removed. It was a week of pleasure to Eleanor; for the travel, the novelties, and the adventures which the whole group had to relate gave never-ending subjects for talk, and their interest in and affection for her left her the assurance of undiminished friendship.

Eleanor's return to Kilrogan was an event of great and joyful importance

to Nannie, Mrs. Moore, and Peter. Even Martha unbent, and showed her satisfaction by the preparation of such a high tea as would have required at least a score of active appetites to do sufficient honor to it. When Nannie, in their own little apartment, was assisting Eleanor to unpack and undress at night, she had much to say about the crowds of pilgrims passing on the way to Lough Derg.

"Some o' the puir things are that faint an' ill ye'd think it wonderful how they had the courage to take the journey on them at all. An' I was speakin' to two o' them, a purty young girl an' her mother, that had sat down beside our gate to rest, miss. They wor far better off an' dacter than the others, an' I asked thim to step inside an' rest in the garden; an' I brought thim the cup o' fresh tay, for th' ould madam was just takin' it thin. The mother had the most to say, an' she tould me they had come a matter o' forty miles. They were from the

parish o' Monhill (that's Mr. Rohan's place, isn't it, Miss Eleanor?), an' wor nigh han' bate out. They'll be comin' back soon, for the 'station' lasts about two weeks, an' I asked the two dacent bodies to stop an' take a good rest. Wasn't I right, Miss Eleanor?" Nannie asked, a little apprehensively. "The girl was that modest and purty 'at I took the notion ye'd be plased to see her, specially if she's from Mr. Rohan's part o' the country, miss."

Eleanor approved Nannie's hospitality to the pilgrims, but could not share her interest in them, even on consideration of their being from the same part as Mr. Rohan. She perceived with pleasure that in her absence Nannie had made still further advances in Mrs. Moore's liking. The little woman was learning more tact and judgment in her attendance on the invalid, and, indeed, filled a place of half-attendant, half-companion which neither Eleanor nor Martha would have been allowed to take.





CHAPTER XXXVII.

TWO PILGRIMS.

It was nearly a week after Eleanor had returned, when, as she sat with Mrs. Moore one afternoon, Nannie appeared at the door, and with a meaning look asked her to come to the garden. When Eleanor had followed her to the gate, she pointed down the road, and said,

"They're comin' now, I b'lieve, Miss Eleanor. There's the girl, so slight an' airy-like, an' I think the mother looks even tireder than when they were goin' by last."

Eleanor saw the two figures, and in an instant felt that Nannie's instincts had not deceived her, for these were pilgrims far above the common herd. In truth, it was Tessy and her mother, who now returned from the pilgrimage upon which the young girl had counted to ease her heart from its load of unreturned love. Norah leaned heavily on her daughter's arm. The whole journey had been more toilsome and exhausting than she had expected, and her head was bowed, and her step languid and slow.

Nannie held the gate open. A sudden shower was that moment threatening, and gave a reason the more for her invitation to enter. Eleanor's heart opened to the modest, rustic beauty of Tessy's face, and she gave a cordial good-day to the two women as she led

them to a sheltered seat. Tessy spoke up, looking shyly and admiringly at the young lady:

"It is me mother that's very tired an' wake," she said, "an' I'm very thankful to rest here a bit. We won't have to go all the way on foot," she continued, with a little excusable pride. "Me father's kyar is to meet us half-way from home, but that itself's a long way still, an' me poor mother not able for it."

Eleanor went back to the house, and, not without a doubt of obtaining it, begged her aunt's permission to bring the two women within-doors. But she need not have felt any fear. Mrs. Moore's mind no longer retained the hard and inhospitable mood which had been its habit of old. All outward events seemed of slight importance to her now, unless they concerned immediately her own comfort and the happiness of the little household. Her mental troubles and her illness had softened and altered her more than her long years of what she had deluded herself into thinking was religious duty and doing of the Divine will. She even assented to Eleanor's proposal that a bed should be offered to the wayfarers, whom in her dim thoughts she took to be some friends of Eleanor or Nannie.

Hurrying back, Eleanor made her guests enter "till the shower was over," and, with a word to Nannie, she conducted them to her own room. There Norah was soon refreshed with tea and food, her poor, tired feet bathed, and her hair smoothed out by Tessy, who hung about her remorsefully.

"Shure, me lady," she said to Eleanor, "'tis all me fau't; for only for me me mother 'ud niver have thought o' takin' the journey. An' oh, saints above! 'twas beyond all I ever expected, the goin' through o' that blessed station. A colleen like me wouldn't mind it so much, but, mother alanna! to think o' me bein' the manes o' bringin' ye into that throng uv poor, ignorant crathurs! There wasn't a bit or sup fit for ye to take in yer lips; an' the beds! though shure, between the prayers and the knockin' on the door o' the wee place we were in, there couldn't be much rest or sleep in it. Even St. Camin's old church had no peace or quiet in it, though we used to go there an' sit by ourselves on the ancient grave-stones."

Presently Norah, turning to Nannie with many grateful thanks, proposed to leave, feeling, as she said, well rested and quite able to resume the journey; but Eleanor refused to let her go. "You must stay here, Mrs. McManus," she said—for Norah had told her her name, and the place whence they had come. "You are not so much of a stranger to us as you might think; for your landlord, Mr. Rohan, has often spoken to me of you and your good husband. You must, at least, sleep here for one night, and then perhaps we can make your journey easy for you to-morrow."

A deep flush suffused Tessy's face at the mention of Rohan's name. Nan-

nie saw and noted, but Eleanor, busy with Norah, had not remarked it.

"Mr. Rohan!" answered Norah; "is he a friend of yours, ma'am?" Well, well! to think o' the ways o' things, now! Shure 'tis little thought I had o' meetin' any one that 'ud know about me or Brian! Tessy darlin', just hear to that now! this kind young lady is a friend of the landlord's, and says he was often tellin' her about yer fayther."

"Yes, mother, I heard," said Tessy, in a low voice. Her mother could guess something of what was passing in her mind. She drew her nearer to her and whispered, while Eleanor and Nannie were busy about some arrangements of the room,

"Maybe ye'd rather I'd not stay here the night, dear. Shure I'd be well able to go on an' stop at the town below."

"No, no, mother dear! 'tis the goodness o' God that's brought us here; for the heart in me was shakin' wid the fear that ye'd be sick on the road. Shure my poor folly and nonsense isn't worth thinkin' about compared to your life, mother machree. Oh, if I'd stayed at home quiet and contint, as well became me, I'd have saved ye all this heart-scald an' sufferin'! God save ye, mother, and get safe home again, an' ye'll see if I'm not sinsible after this!"

"Tessy jewel," said her mother, when they were by themselves, "did ye remark ere a one follo'in' us like, since we left the Holy Island? I'm greatly mistaken, shure, or I seen Denis Kiernan wid these two eyes, keepin' out o' the way, but still watchin' an' comin' after us."

"Tut, mother! it couldn't be him," answered Tessy. "He's not that silly

to come away from home jist to watch an' follo' us, an' I'm thinkin' 'tis little notion o' makin' a station would be in *his* mind. An' his father 'ud be

wantin' him at the harvest now, anyway."

"Well, agra, maybe ye're right; but when we stopped at the gate here—"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OPENED LIPS AND HEARTS.

SHE did not go on, for Nannie returned just then, and interrupted the conversation. She had news to tell them—Mr. Rohan had just come! When Eleanor left her pilgrim protégées, she had, on going down to the sitting-room, found him with her aunt. Her visit to the Stanleys had altered the usual time of his appearance, and it was now as unexpected as it was welcome. Gerald, on hearing of the arrival of Tessy and Norah, laughed at the odd coincidence. He had not heard of their being away from home; and although he had sufficient remembrance of the interview with Brian McManus, of which Tessy had been the subject, to bring a conscious look to his face, he had little suspicion of being himself the cause of this journey of the farmer's wife and daughter. When the lingering twilight was fallen, tea over, and Mrs. Moore taken into Nannie's charge, Gerald asked Eleanor to come with him into the fragrant air and down through the shadowy starlit paths. With a flush on her cheek and a flutter at her heart, Eleanor complied, throwing over her head a light kerchief of soft gray wool. Her dress, too, was gray, and in the uncertain light made the outlines of her figure dim and undefined, while Gerald was much more plainly distinguishable

from the contrast of vest and linen with his dark clothes.

Until this moment no open word of avowal of his love had passed Gerald's lips. All the romance of his nature was aroused; and since that first visit to Kilrogan in the opening spring, he had let his dream go on, unwilling to disturb its happy course by even the bliss of certainty, which, as reality, must be antagonistic to the true romance and poetry of love. But his passion for Eleanor had been practical enough in its effects on his life: to it he owed all that he had attempted of reform in his own nature, and of wisdom in the ordering of his affairs. This time he had left home with better assurance of ultimate success in all his projects. The harvests, too, were more promising, the state of the country more tranquil and hopeful. What wonder if now, at the side of this beautiful companion, with every influence of time and place softening, exalting, and purifying his heart and soul, he should find it impossible to call any words to him but those which told of his love!

"I have kept silence a long time, Miss Crawford—Eleanor;" and as he spoke he took her hand and placed it on his arm; "but to-night it is beyond my strength of will. It hardly needs

the poor speech that I can command to tell you what brings me here. You know I love you. I love you, my peerless, my dearest, almost as well as you deserve to be loved—as well as a man's heart can love. I might better try and tell you all that the loving of you has done for me. It has, I think, taken the worst of my selfish, spoiled nature away, and given me power to begin, at least, to do my duty in life. If you help me, best beloved and noblest, I may yet be worthy of you. *Will* you help me, Eleanor? You do not fear to work, I know, and oh! how much work there is waiting for you over there in Annadale, if you will come and be its mistress and my wife!"

Eleanor had not spoken. The magic words "I love you" had flashed their light on heart and brain, making her for the moment unconscious of all else, even of Gerald's glowing speech. It was no surprise to Eleanor, this wording of the love which had long spoken in every look and action; but to hear the blessed syllables, placing the truth beyond every lingering doubt, called up within her the heavenly thrill that no other words of earthly speech can ever stir in woman's heart like that celestial music, "I love you," breathed from the lips of the man beloved. And now when the monotone of the melody was taken up and harmonized with every highest chord of her nature, her youth, her faith, her maiden pride and joy in her lover—oh! then indeed Eleanor Crawford felt that immortal life had crowned her with its amaranth;

that Love's undying choral was awakened in her soul, to fill its temple with a hymn of worship for evermore.

When at last her thoughts had rallied around that supreme and central joy, and she comprehended what Gerald was saying to her, she found only a simple answer to make to his prayers: "You have been teaching me so well to love you, how could I choose but learn?" But it satisfied her lover, low spoken as it was, with rose-flushed cheeks and eyes sparkling through tears. You see, she was a born teacher, and, like all true teachers, ever willing to learn. Life and its high purposes were to her a never-ending school of divine lessons for worthy learning and noble practice.

In happy talk or happier silence they walked to and fro in the fragrant stillness along the sweetest part of that "shady boreen," each to each embodying the whole of life and love and the meaning of existence.

Once or twice Eleanor fancied that the leaves of the thick laburnum and hawthorn trees made a strange rustling for so still an air. She turned sharply and clasped Gerald's arm—"Did you not see a figure, a man's figure, there in the shadow?" she said, with a vague sense of alarm. Gerald turned to look, but saw nothing. "There is no one, my darling; indeed, who should there be?" he said. But Eleanor's hearing was exquisitely keen, and she listened again.

"There is some one, I am sure, and I feel a strange, terrible fear—"





CHAPTER XXXIX.

DENIS KIERNAN KEEPS HIS OATH.

SHE stepped back a pace or two, trying to pierce the leafy shade with her frightened gaze. "Yes, yes—there is! O God! O Gerald! My love, my love!" For there was a shot—a rush through the trees, and the terrible sound of a human body striking the earth, as Gerald fell, wounded and senseless.

Her piercing shriek sunk into a helpless wail as she threw herself beside the motionless form of him who but a moment before stood erect in all the pride of life and strength. She raised him in her arms, and felt his heart still beating. Then, in one full tide, her will and courage returned to her. She loosed his vesture and gave him room to breathe, fanning him with his broad hat and chafing his hands. Presently his eyes opened, and, looking at her as if the sight of her brought life back to him, he whispered,

"I am badly hurt, my dearest, but," with a smile into her white face, "not dead yet, you see. What a coward, to fire at an unarmed man! It was Kieran: I saw his face as the pistol flashed. Ah! yes"—as if a sudden recollection came to him—"he is, as Tessy said, my ene—" He stopped for a few moments.

"Leave me here, my precious! I shall be well enough on this soft grass

till you go to the house for help. Only kiss me, poor frightened darling—my love, my wife! It will give me life enough to last till you come. She laid him as gently and as easily as she could on the sloping moss, and stooped to kiss him again and again, keeping back so bravely the wild grief and fear that shook her; then she turned and flew to the cottage. Just at the gate she met help; for Nannie, hearing the report, had called Martha and Peter to her, and they were running to find its cause.

"Come, come!" was all that Eleanor found strength to utter, as she turned and led them to where Gerald lay.

They lifted and bore him through the still, dewy night to the house. A small, slow thread of crimson trickled from his breast just above the heart. He had escaped instant death by a hair's-breadth. Eleanor kept close at his side, holding his hand, and with her arm beneath his head. White and trembling, she yet commanded her voice, and gave Nannie and Martha directions to open a room which had been long unused, and prepare it for the reception of the wounded man.

It was ten o'clock when the sad little procession entered the silent, peaceful house.

Tessy had waited till her mother

was in a sound sleep. From the window she had seen Gerald and Eleanor leave the house together, and in a moment she felt that now, indeed, her wild love-dream was quite dispelled. Who so fit for her hero as this gracious, beautiful young lady, whose kindness had been to her and her fainting mother as that of an angel of mercy? How could Tessy McManus ever have let her heart aspire so high?

She came softly down-stairs in search of Nannie, and as she reached the hall the front door opened to admit the dismal burden which the four inmates of the house bore between them. Sick with fright and horror, Tessy shrunk back; then mastering herself, and seeing she could be of some use, she came forward, and following Nannie, assisted her in the preparation of the room for Gerald's reception.

A few breathless words from Nannie told her what had happened, and, as in a flash of lightning, there came to poor Tessy the comprehension of the whole tragedy: Denis Kiernan's oath of vengeance on the landlord—her mother's certainty as to having seen him following their steps, in which, indeed, Tessy had shared, though she would not increase her mother's fear by admitting having seen him—the mistake which the unhappy man would naturally fall into in seeing Eleanor coming with Rohan from the house which he had seen Tessy enter. The poor girl stole quietly out through the garden and gate, hardly knowing whither she went. She walked farther and farther from the house, till at length she was in the very lane where the terrible deed was done. There, kneeling on the grass, with wild sobs and tears, she poured out prayers for Gerald's life, for forgiveness of her

own sin; for was not her foolish, mad passion the cause of all this misery? Presently a low voice caught her ear.

"Tessy! in the name o' God an' all the saints, come here and speak to me!"

Tessy did not doubt for a moment who it was. "Come here, *ye!* There's no one to see or hear ye but me, cruel, wicked murderer that ye are!"

"Oh! Tessy, Tessy! I was mad whin I fired that shot, thinkin' it was ye was wid him; but the flash o' the pistol showed me a strange face, an' I knew in me soul I'd wronged ye an' him both. Is—he—dead?" His voice sunk to a gasp.

"I don't know. What matter is it to ye, when ye know ye meant to kill him? Why don't ye fly—away from here—away out o' the world? What keeps me from callin' them to take you prisoner? What *do* ye stay there for, Denis Kiernan?" And Tessy stamped her foot, half crazed with grief and anger and the uncertainty of what she ought to do. The repugnance to turn informer or betrayer, almost inbred in the Irish nature, had arisen, and was holding her back from rushing to the house to procure the capture of Denis.

"No need to call: I'm here whin they come for me," Denis answered, doggedly. "I'm not coward enough to run from the law. Let it take its coorse, for all I care."

"Yes, 'tis well for ye to talk that way, isn't it? Have ye no thought for the father an' mother to be disgraced an' heart-broken wid ye? Go down there, I tell ye," she said, pointing to a dim light shining from Erna, "an' try to hide yerself till we know if it's life or death will follow yer work to-night."

Denis turned, more as if he felt that

he must obey Tessy's command than with any wish to save himself. He walked slowly inside the bank which rose along the road to Erna, and, in the half-stupor which had fallen upon him, stood still to watch the car which was being rapidly driven to Erna by Peter in quest of the magistrate, Mr. North,

and the surgeon. Just outside of the town the miserable assassin found an empty and deserted sheiling, which he entered, and, throwing himself on a heap of straw in the corner, sunk into a slumber as profound and unconscious as if it had been induced by wild excess in drinking ardent spirits.

CHAPTER XL.

GERALD'S VENGEANCE.

At the house where Gerald Rohan lay, slowly regaining consciousness, there was hurried going and coming; but it was neither noisy nor confused. Eleanor and Nannie had had too recent and too near acquaintance with illness and death to be unprepared for this new, sudden visitation. Martha, without ability to design or superintend, was yet a good assistant, and the three women, after Peter had helped in laying Gerald on the couch, prepared everything likely to be needed in the treatment of the wounded man. Eleanor held his hand or bathed his face and wet his lips with wine. She hardly thought of her aunt, or how this terrible calamity would affect her, and had utterly forgotten the humble guests who had so engaged her thoughts a few hours before. All care, all hope, her life itself, seemed concentrated on the being lying there so quiet, so helpless, stricken in a moment from the height of vigor and strength.

He pressed her hand and drew her face down to his own. "You will stay close to me, Eleanor, my poor darling," he said, "as long as you can

bear it? If the doctor thinks it a bad case, you know I have so much to say to you."

Eleanor returned a faint "Yes," and seated herself by him.

After what seemed to the waiting and anxious women a long, long time, the doctor entered. Peter had secured him first, and had then gone on to North Villa. Mr. North, hastily roused from his first sleep, could only express his horror and regret. He told the doctor he would instantly take measures to arrest the assassin, and promised to follow him to Kilrogan with all possible speed.

With Mrs. North's thoughts and emotions, as she heard that Gerald Rohan had been shot, perhaps fatally, it may be best not to meddle too closely, but leave them to resolve themselves into the final and more worthy feeling of sorrow for such a manly and valued life so vengefully attacked. But after her husband had gone to call the powers of the law to his aid, she found it impossible to compose herself to rest, or even to remain alone. She went to Miss Irwin's room, and there found companionship and sym-

pathy for her disturbed and restless mind.

Dr. Fleming was not only a skilful surgeon, but a man of kindly sympathies and quick intuitions; he was a friend and visitor at Mr. North's, and had met Gerald there more than once. It was he who had attended Mrs. Moore, and he retained a deep admiration of Eleanor's person and manner, and more, perhaps, of her skill and efficiency as nurse. As he entered the room of his patient, and saw Miss Crawford standing so close to him, a surmise as to the true state of affairs between them arose in his mind. A few words of regret to Gerald were answered by a meaning look and a low-voiced sentence which at once made the situation clear.

"I think you already know this young lady, doctor: let me present her to you now as my future wife."

Dr. Fleming bowed low, and without permitting any further effort at conversation from Gerald, proceeded, while Eleanor retired to another part of the room, to ascertain how and where the wound had been received.

The ball had sunk deep, and would be painful to extract, he saw, and would possibly be followed by dangerous inflammation and fever; but Gerald's youth and health were powerful auxiliaries to the cure. Dr. Fleming lost no time in assuring Eleanor of the hopefulness of the case, and then, seeing that the resolution and courage which had sustained her through the whole scene were about to forsake her, he led her from the room, and remained with her until she had regained her fortitude, and had consented to take a brief rest.

By the time she was allowed to return to her place beside Gerald, the

ball had been extracted and the doctor's best skill applied to diminish the pain and make the sufferer as comfortable and as hopeful as might be; but the shock to the system had been severe, and Dr. Fleming knew that it was almost impossible to prevent fever.

Toward morning Mr. North arrived. Eleanor, grave and worn-looking, but very calm and self-possessed, met him, and taking him to the sitting-room, where they could talk uninterruptedly, she gave him a simple, straightforward narrative of the unhappy occurrence, withholding only the name which Gerald had pronounced after he had received the wound. "Mr. Rohan has been visiting here for some months," she said, "as you are already probably aware. And as Dr. Fleming will also probably tell you that Mr. Rohan announced our engagement to him last night, you will not wonder at the close interest which I possess in all that concerns your friend. He has spoken to me of many of his tenants, and particularly of one family of *McManus*, the mother and daughter of which are, strangely enough, at this moment under this roof."

Eleanor related in a few words the circumstances which had led Norah and Tessy to Kilrogan, and went on: "I have hardly had time to connect my thoughts, but may there not be some relation, which I cannot at all make out yet, between their presence here and the mention of the name of a young farmer who is their near neighbor? It was a name which Mr. Rohan pronounced just after he was shot"—she turned even paler than she already was, and shuddered—"and then seemed reluctant to repeat."

"It will hardly be possible for the villain to escape, Miss Crawford: some

of the best men in the Constabulary are hunting for him, and I expect tidings of his capture every moment. As you say these two women are still here, can you not go to them and try and find out if your suspicions of this young fellow are well grounded? And you will see the necessity of detaining them here until this shocking affair is thoroughly investigated."

Eleanor assented, and having led Mr. North to the door of Gerald's room, she left him to learn from the doctor, who still remained by the bedside, the nature of the wound and the condition of his patient.

Opening the door of her aunt's room, she saw that she still slept; so the task of communicating the dismal night's work to her might still be deferred. Then she went sadly to her own little sitting-room with a feeling of having suffered some physical injury, as yet-undefined and dull. Nannie was there awaiting her, tearful and sympathetic, but with a freshly prepared meal ready, to which she coaxed and prayed Eleanor to sit down. And knowing how great was the necessity for all the strength of mind and body which she could gather, Eleanor ate and drank as well as she was able, and felt the benefit of doing so. She inquired of Nannie if she had seen either of their guests.

"The young girl wint out o' the house last night, Miss Eleanor, after she met thim that were bringin' in the young squire. She didn't come in for an hour or more, maybe, an' thin she seemed jist heart-broken; but she said nothin' to me, an' went an' lay down beside her mother, who has slept sound since nine o'clock last night."

"Nannie, just see if they are awake now, and ask them to rise and come

to me. I must speak to them alone here."

In a little while Tessy entered Eleanor's room. It was easy to see that the night had been one of restlessness and suffering to her also. Eleanor took her hand, and spoke kindly and very quietly to her.

"Tessy, I am sure I can trust you to tell me whatever you know of this terrible thing. I will be your friend if you will open your heart to me. Can you think who fired that shot last night, and why Mr. Rohan was tracked and followed here?"

"Oh, ma'am, I'm sure 'tis all an awful mistake! I do know the man that did the wicked deed; an', what will be worse for him, Mr. Rohan knows it too. Will he—will he die?" she gasped. "An' oh, God help us! to think that only for me, miserable girl, it wouldn't have happened!"

Eleanor winced. "Why, Tessy, how have you had anything to do with it all?"

"Well, ye see, ma'am, askin' yer pardou, we are very near the same height, an' in the gray o' the evenin' might aisily be mistaken one for the other. An' Denis—that's the boy that has courted me this many a day, ma'am, whin I wouldn't listen to him—got jealous an' angry"—her face crimsoned—"an' because he seen the young landlord comin' now an' thin to me father's house, took it into his mad, foolish brain that it was Mr. Rohan was standin' in his way; an' besides, ma'am"—Tessy paused and looked into Eleanor's eyes—"I'm maybe givin' away his life to ye now, my lady, but I must tell ye the truth—Denis Kiernan's bound by thim wicked lodges to do the landlord a hurt; an' what wid that, an' thinkin' that he

had come here to meet me last night, the unfortunate boy—" She stopped, and broke into sobbing.

Her fears for Rohan's life, her pity for the miserable fate of Denis, which she was too ready to charge her own folly with having brought upon him, quite mastered her, and Eleanor saw she could get nothing more of coherent speech from her.

In her own mind, while she had heard Tessy's avowal of her share in the enmity between Gerald and Kiernan, there had sprung into life one instant's suspicion of her betrothed husband's honor; but she looked, as with the very power of her soul, into Tessy's face, saw its ingenuous innocence, heard her denunciation, which yet was half an exculpation, of her peasant-lover, and the unworthy doubt of Gerald's fealty died at once and forever.

"You saw this brave fellow last night, then, Tessy? Did he acknowledge his deed to you, and tell you how, skulking in the shadow, he had fired on an unguarded and unarmed man?"

Bitter scorn and grief were in her voice and words. To think of a life like Gerald's sacrificed to a wretched, senseless revenge and a mistaken jealousy!

Before Tessy found voice to answer, Norah came in, and sinking on the floor, half kneeling before Eleanor, she spoke:

"Oh, I know it all—all the dark, dreadful story! Tessy, Tessy, I told ye I knew him that was watchin' an' followin' us, an' now this is the ind o' it; an' his old father an' mother sint to their grave, an' all belongin' to him disgraced, an' us wid the blame o' it all!"

Eleanor kept silence, waiting to glean

from the poor woman's talk whatever grains of intelligible truth she could put together.

"Yes," went on Mrs. McManus, turning to Tessy, "I found her they call Martha down-stairs, whin I wint to see where ye had gone, and she told me the sorrow an' misfortun' we had brought on the house that tuk us, poor, tired-out women, into its kindly shelter."

"Mother, mother, I'd give me life to have hindered it all, an' to save him that maybe death is waitin' to take this minute!"

It was of Gerald she thought and spoke, but Norah, perhaps wilfully, misconstrued her meaning, and again addressed Eleanor.

"See that now, me lady. An' if she had just said half as much to the boy himself a year ago, it would ha' saved all this moil."

"Tessy"—Eleanor spoke low to the girl, who hung her head, not daring to make her real meaning clear, yet strongly recoiling from having it thought that she cared for Denis Kiernan—"Tessy, will it, then, be a grief to you if he should be taken and punished for this crime?"

"I am the means of his havin' done it," she said, evasively. "Do ye think I c'u'd iver know rest or pace if it was thro' me he was destroyed?"

There was no need to say any more for the present. Eleanor, joining on the mother and daughter the necessity of remaining until something more decided had taken place in Gerald's condition and the capture of Kiernan, again returned to the patient's room. She stopped inside the door, arrested by the sight of the group standing at Gerald's bedside.

Dr. Fleming sat supporting the

wounded man as he raised him slightly on the pillows. At the foot of the bed was Mr. North, in magisterial capacity, with note-book and pencil in hand. Two police-officers held between them, manacled, wild and desperate looking, the young peasant-lover of Tessy—the tenant who had so insolently threatened Gerald—the jealous, revengeful madman who had fired, “with intent to kill,” at his landlord, and, in his belief, his rival in Tessy’s love.

“Look on the prisoner, Mr. Rohan,” said Mr. North, in his sonorous, impressive voice, “and say if you recognize him as the man who fired upon you last night.”

Gerald did look; there was a fever-flush on his cheek, a dangerous brightness in his eyes. The thoughts of months, with the arguments and reflections which had taken his mind many hours to settle and mature, were, as always in such crises, concentrated into this pregnant moment. Here stood the Ribbonman, the assassin—the enemy of society and law—the destroyer of his life. He recognized him but too well, and saw an answer in Kiernan’s face as he met the eyes of the man whom he had intended to kill with a woful look, which pleaded for mercy while admitting his guilt. If he identified him and died of his wound, Denis Kiernan would be hung. If he recovered, there was transportation for life, with hard labor, before this young, stalwart frame. Supposing he had been in Denis’s place, with the same influences of class and creed, unbridled passions, and sense of personal injury, would he have acted more wisely? Then Gerald Rohan turned his eyes to Eleanor—his love, his bride, whose sweet lips had met his own so lately,

whose love had crowned and sanctified his life, his soul, for evermore. Should he begin their united existence with the horror of a ruined life to cloud it, even though law demanded the sacrifice of the transgressor, though society could only find safety in the extermination of such criminals?

As Eleanor stood motionless, arrested by the tragical significance of the situation, she questioned his gaze eagerly with wide-strained eyes, and from the two souls there beamed to one another a great pity, a heavenly forgiveness, a divine sympathy of mutual love.

He hardly waited for her low cry—“Gerald! Gerald!” till he turned and looked steadily once more at Kiernan, this time with an eloquent gaze wherein the wretched man read pardon, sorrow, and pity, to last him for repentance and hope all his life to come. Then, turning his eyes to Mr. North, Gerald Rohan said slowly, in a loud, clear voice,

“I do not recognize this man; I cannot identify him!” The effort was too great for his spent strength; he sank on Dr. Fleming’s arm, unconscious.

John Wellington North, Esquire, dropped his note-book in dismay. Taken red-handed, almost giving himself up to the law, yet exonerated—declared innocent—free! He was a soft-hearted, merciful man, but surely this was too much. What weakness! what almost criminal leniency! and toward a class of offenders then particularly obnoxious to every interest of law and order! An expostulation rose to his lips; but Dr. Fleming, having seen his patient laid at ease, and admitted a current of fresh air to his face and chest, came forward and peremptorily required all to leave the room but himself and Eleanor.

"I cannot endanger my patient's life by such excitement prolonged any further. There will be time enough to decide the legal points of the case when he is out of danger," he said to Mr. North.

"Till which time, then," said the disconcerted magistrate to the officers, "you will see this man in safe custody in Erna jail; but keep him and treat him only as detained on suspicion."

They left the room. Dr. Fleming beckoned Eleanor to his side, pressed her hand kindly, and left her close to Gerald, betaking himself to the farthest corner of the room, where he busied himself in some preparation for the sick man.

Eleanor knelt, and, holding Gerald's hand, hid her face on the bed, her heart, while it was broken with sorrow, singing a glad hallelujah over the nobility of soul of the man she loved. She had come into this scene with a mind all clouded and doubtful. No less had she felt the horror of sacrificing this assassin's life than the justice of punishing his crime. Even had she been herself the victim, she would have found it a hard alternative, and she felt that she dared not seek in anywise to influence Gerald's decision. And here it was decided by a higher authority than her own, a higher law than man's.

Mercy, sweeter and stronger than justice, tender, human pity, divine forgiveness, shone in his eyes and formed the syllables of that blessed denial of his enemy's identity.

"Oh, thank God! thank God! my love is greater than justice, nobler than vengeance," sobbed Eleanor, kissing the inanimate hand which lay within her own. Its faint pressure told her, after a little, that Gerald was returning to his senses. Dr. Fleming approached and, aided by Eleanor, applied every restorative which skill and love could devise.

"I *must* go now, indeed, Miss Crawford," said Dr. Fleming; "but I have the comfort of knowing that I leave my patient to a perfectly qualified deputy. I have left no powders or pills which you may feel it on your conscience to throw out of window," he went on, with a twinkle in his eye which betrayed his suspicions of her dealings with some of his prescriptions for Mrs. Moore; "but you will see that Rohan has perfect quiet with the stimulants which I have directed, and this draught, if he should become more feverish."

So Eleanor, aided by Nannie and Peter, took upon herself the responsibility of nursing her betrothed from this close encounter with death back to life, and health, and faithful love.





CHAPTER XLI.

ELEANOR FINDS HELP.

ON the second morning after their arrival at Kilrogan, Norah and Tessy were preparing to turn once more toward home. They knew from Nannie of the arrest of Denis, and of the refusal of Mr. Rohan to identify him as his assassin. But they knew also that he was again in jail, and could not allow themselves to hope that he would be at last acquitted. Eleanor found time, even in all her care and grief, to provide for their comfortable return to home. Peter was to take them a half-day's journey on the car; thence it was but a little way to where their own would meet them. The mother and daughter had no voluble words at command with which to thank their hostess; but as Norah held Eleanor's hand, she prayed, with streaming, uplifted eyes, a prayer in her Irish tongue. Though she could understand but a few words of it, Eleanor needed no interpreter to translate to her its overflowing gratitude, its fervent blessing, its devout petition for all good and happiness on her and hers.

"If the young master's merciful heart, wid a soft word from yerself, me lady, will try an' sphare the old father an' mother o' this unfortunate boy from bitter, black grief an' shame, shurely the blessin' o' Heaven' 'ill follow yer steps, an' if iver a landlord had

tenants ready to serve him an' stan' by him, it 'ill be Mr. Rohan, if—if—"

She would have said "if he lives," but Eleanor's face checked her.

"Whatever we can do, Mrs. M'Manus, trust us, will be done, for the sake of pity and for the love of the merciful Christ," she said, her voice sinking to a whisper. "The day may come when we will claim the love and duty which I believe you will have ready for us."

Tessy found not a word to say, but she raised the hand of Eleanor, the chosen love of the man whom she, poor Tessy, had dared to worship, and pressed on it a long kiss, vowing in her humbled, sorrowful heart to love and serve this gracious woman with all a woman's fealty if ever she should be called on for such devotion.

"I'll write to ye, Tessy," Nannie said at parting, "whin some sort o' peace and comfort comes among us again. An' ye'll not be frettin' about that young neighbor o' yours. Ye may trust to Miss Eleanor an' Mr. Rohan that they'll get him off some way."

Peter was already seated on the high "driver's seat." He could not quite reconcile it to his own dignity, or that of the horse and car, to be thus employed in the conveying of Lough

Derg pilgrims on their journey; now, too, when many times a day he was obliged to go to and fro between the house and Erna on some errand for the sick gentleman's service.

"If they two wimmen came to make a station for the good o' their sows," he said, "it ill becomes 'em to set up for ladies this way. The grace they got goin' roun' the hard stones o' the Holy Well on their knees 'll soon be melted off on the soft sate o' me iligant kyar. But shure 'tis me bisness to obey orders, an' far be it from me to go again' the young lady's anyhow," he concluded, with a vigorous cut of the whip, a part of which at least fell to the horse's share. "'Twill take a nate bit o' the fat off ye, Alderman!" The name was a sudden inspiration; but Peter knew a genuine flash of genius when he uttered it, and thenceforth Kilrogan's steed was "Alderman" for evermore.

"Mother," said Tessy, as they turned down the road and lost sight of Kilrogan, "maybe Lough Derg is the place for some to get comfort to their hearts an' ease from their sins; but I'm thinkin' that God takes any place he thinks best to show a poor body the inside o' her soul an' make her sensible o' her folly an' selfishness; an', after all, *my* rale station was made at Kilrogan above there, an' not on the bare stones about St. Camin's Church."

"Yis, darlin'," answered her mother, "we wint through a worse penance there than e'er a wan the priest iver put on us. An' now we have to try an' break the sorrow to that poor father an' mother at home."

"But maybe, mother, we needn't brathe a word av it at all; anyway we'll wait an' see what'll be done."

To this Norah agreed, and had rea-

son afterward to be glad of having "kept a quiet tongue."

Peter, after a while, condescended to take a little notice of the "wimmen." He established a conversation, in which Norah sustained the chief share, for Tessy's mind was busy with conjectures, and plans, and resolves for the future.

They stopped at the little town of Maguire's Bridge, whence they sent word home that night for the Rathlinn car to meet them, and at the end of the next day they found themselves at the farm, welcomed by Brian, and Winny Moriarty, vice-regent in Norah's absence, and the whole minority of children and farm-hands.

It might have been the excitement of the scene at his bedside which hindered Gerald's wound from healing "by first intention." He suffered much, and the fever was severe. The doctor was too carefully careless and too laboriously at ease in his manner to give Eleanor assurance of safety. Her heart sank, and fear brooded over her like a heavy cloud. After four or five days of constant watching and attendance, Dr. Fleming felt that her tense nerves, her worn, anxious look, called for his interference.

"My dear young lady," he said to her, "of all the important things to Mr. Rohan's recovery, none is of such importance as bringing a bright and hopeful spirit about him. This anxiety and close confinement will soon unfit you for a nurse's duties. Do, I beg—nay, I command you—go into the fresh air this afternoon—quite away from the house. If you will come to my office for a prescription which I shall have ready, you can save me from a second visit to-day, and I need the time for another and more distant patient."

Eleanor promised obedience, and that afternoon, having left Nannie in charge of the sick-room, she set out on the old familiar road to Erna. In this crisis of her life she seemed to be living her whole past and present at once. There was no vague hint or expectation of the future; it was like a rehearsal of all she had suffered or enjoyed. Half unconsciously she passed over the lonely country road and entered the narrow street of Erna. Having received the package at Dr. Fleming's, she turned again toward home. How lonely she felt! Oh, if her mother had lived! if she had been so happy as to have a sister! For almost the first time in her life she longed for a woman-friend to whom she could talk out all her love, her sorrow, her fear for Gerald's life. To bear this heavy burden alone and unhelped seemed quite beyond her strength.

Without definite intention she took the street leading up to the old "preaching-house." It was prayer-meeting evening, and the door stood open, showing the interior, shadowy and cavernous as of old. A few feeble lights glimmered in the darkness, although outside the evening air was filled with the warm, soft radiance left to it by the vanished sun, the crescent moon and slow-coming stars blending with and sustaining it till they could transmute it into their purer light. Eleanor entered, and seated herself on a form near the door, hardly knowing whither she had come or wherefore. If she had been a Catholic, her heart might have found the utterance it needed in a Catholic church before a shrine, breathing an "Ave Maria" or an "Agnus Dei;" but Eleanor was a Protestant of Protestants, needing to the utmost the right of freedom for soul and

conscience, the liberty of growth and progress in all faith and hope for this life and the future; and the people among whom she had been born and brought up regarded her as having forsaken their faith, and lost her hope of salvation in her apostasy. The leader who from the desk gave out the hymn was a meek old man, a warm friend of her father; and as his broken voice led the uncertain tones of his small congregation, Eleanor forgot, or did not notice, the mean surroundings, but with a deep sense of the nearness of purer intelligences, felt her spirit mingling with theirs and ascending in the aspiration of the hymn. It was the same one which she had sung for her father on the last night of their earthly communing—

"Being of beings, God of love,"

and her lonely, loving heart found in this simple, solemn worship such uplifting and strengthening as she might in vain have sought kneeling in the splendor of arch and dome and jewel-tinted oriel, with music floating round her, divine enough to bring the seraphic host to echo the celestial strains.

She left the place unseen by every one but old Davy, whose reverence for the "house" and the service was too great to allow him to accost even the "young mistress." With a lighter heart, Eleanor walked back to Kilrogan. Nature, unsympathizing and unresponsive to the indifferent or unconscious mind, needs but the cry of a human heart for consolation and companionship to answer, full-voiced and eloquent, with unstinted sympathy and tender ministrations. The heavy veil of her hopelessness was lifted, and Eleanor drew from tree and field, flowery hedge-row and gliding stream, friendly

and intimate help and counsel. She heard whispers of hope and cheer, answers full of understanding of the deep experience through which she had come, and the wide, low-stooping sky bent over and enfolded her with a great

comfort of wise, protecting love and care. As she entered the door of Kilrogan she had well fulfilled the doctor's prescription, and bore with her a bright confidence, a strong faith, and a serene spirit.

CHAPTER XLII.

MR. NORTH COMPOUNDS A FELONY.

FOR some days after this Gerald still lay in the torment of pain and fever; one lung was, unhappily, wounded, although slightly, and Dr. Fleming's utmost watchfulness, care, and skill were employed to save him. All his nurse's powers of tendance, thought, and foresight, and his own youth and vigor of constitution, were needed. But at last Eleanor, worn out with watching and anxiety, could leave the sick-room for a few hours at a time; and in her own white-curtained little chamber she lay down to weep tears of thankful happiness in the certainty that Gerald Rohan's life was out of danger.

Whatever hours of the day or night Dr. Fleming could spare or steal from his other duties he gave to Gerald. Besides the warm personal friendship which he felt for him, he was deeply interested in the case—an unusually interesting one from a scientific point of view.

As soon as Dr. Fleming's consent was obtained, Mr. North visited Gerald, and conversed seriously with him on the course which he was pursuing toward Denis Kiernan. He represented to him the almost guilty leniency which he was exercising toward so

great a criminal; but Gerald was immovable.

"Dear friend," he said, "don't think me either weak or obstinate in this matter. I take a great share of that young fellow's guilt on myself. He ought to have known me in some other light than that of his enemy. If I had half done my duty toward him and the rest of the tenants, he would have so known me. And then, just at the very moment when I should have been considerate to him, I let my hot temper drive me into an exhibition of arrogance of which I am ashamed to think now. True, my sins against him, multiplied tenfold, would be a poor excuse for his dastardly attempt on my life; but you see that is still left me, and I can surely make a better use of it than to consign a young fellow like him to an existence of misery and shame."

"Well, I hope you may never have to repent it. How can you answer for letting such a character loose on society? I fear I have exceeded my own magisterial authority in the exercise of discrimination, and may be chargeable with compounding a felony. Certainly, we must get the fellow out of the country as fast as we can."

"Ah! then, you will help me in that too," said Gerald. "That is good of you, and like yourself. See, now, how things submit and arrange themselves, once one has taken a clear resolve to do what he believes to be the best. I felt so troubled about how I was to manage the getting him off. With Eleanor's help, I have sent home for money, knowing it would be the first need, and that at least is ready. I want him sent as far from Ireland as we can find a place for him. Already, you know, some of my poorer tenants are in Australia; let him" (the name of the young farmer was never mentioned between these two) "be sent there, if possible, and as speedily as a ship can be found for him to sail in. I will place a small sum of money to his credit in Sydney, enough to give him a chance to make an honest beginning. Don't think me quixotic," Gerald added, with a slight flush. "I remember the look in that fellow's eyes as he stood there at the bed-foot, and I believe in the possibility of his redemption; and, after all, it

is more than half sheer selfishness that makes me impatient to get him out of the country and out of my thoughts. Until he is gone I can't feel that my own life is clear and ready for new and vigorous action."

Mr. North, having once undertaken the mission, would not be dilatory or half-hearted in fulfilling it. He procured Denis Kiernan's release from the jail the next day; met him, unnoticed by any of his Erna friends, and giving him a little money and the ticket for his passage to Sydney, sent him on his journey to Liverpool, with an admonition to repentance and reform which was really quite as eloquent and, it is to be hoped, ultimately more effective, than his missionary-meeting speechifying. He said nothing to Gerald, until, about a week after their last recorded conversation, he brought him a note from the ship's agent certifying that Denis Kiernan, late of Monahill, County Leitrim, had that day taken passage in the ship *Python* for Sydney.





CHAPTER XLIII.

CONVALESCENCE AND COURTESIES.

FROM the villa came every day inquiries and messages, with fruits and flowers; and from Ennismore a note, which Gerald, with a well-pleased face, handed to Eleanor to read. It was in reply to a few lines which he had dictated to the doctor, conveying to Lady Ennismore the tidings of his mishap, his place of abode, and his engagement to Miss Crawford.

"Look here, Eleanor; this will give you some idea of her old ladyship," he said. The note, written in a quaint, stiff hand, expressed deep concern for Gerald's wound, but congratulated him on the compensation which fate had permitted in decreeing that the misfortune should happen at Kilrogan. She desired her admiring respects and regards to be given to the young lady whom it would soon be her pleasure to salute as the wife of her old friend's son. A superb basket of late roses came with the note for Eleanor; fruit and game, and some new books for Rohan.

Eleanor's pleasure in the messages and the flowers was a little tempered by a regret that this engagement should thus, in its first freshness, be so generally known. The old dowager's knowledge of it was not so unpleasant; but she felt that every one in Erna who knew her name or Rohan's was

busy extracting from the "accident" (as Gerald had induced the doctor and Mr. North to proclaim the wound he had received); and the announcement of his engagement, as much gossip as the busy-tongued population of a small town could force such exciting events to yield. She hid her feeling of chagrin from Gerald, however, knowing well that his instant declaration of the relation in which he stood to her had saved her from many a false and unkind remark.

When Gerald was able to leave his room, the apples were ripening in Kilrogan orchard. An easy-chair was placed for him under one royal old tree, gnarled and mossy and of wide-spreading branches. There, in the soft warmth of the early September days, he sat, with Eleanor beside him, reading much to him; but most of all, through frank, unrestrained, and heartful talk they made acquaintance with each other's mind and heart. Gerald spoke of his mother oftenest; her love for her home and the people of Annadale, her projects for helping them to better lives. "One plan which she had just finished thinking out, was a school to teach the young girls to embroider muslin, an industry which has advanced to a lucrative employment in Ireland since she was taken away. If you

can only take up the project and put it into practice, I think you will find it a vast help in the employment of the idle hands, which can be made useful and self-supporting."

He told Eleanor much of the McManus family, their fidelity and worthiness. In speaking of Tessy, he was as careful of her name, as reverential to her youth and innocence, as if she had been a daughter of Mrs. North herself. But Eleanor's woman's wit, as she heard of the warning letter, the jealousy of Kiernan, could not fail to suggest to her a true reading of the sad little love sorrow through which the lovely rustic had passed; but neither did her lips betray her thoughts of Tessy's motives and feelings.

The true relation of Nannie to Mrs. Moore and her future inheritance of the old home was all discussed between them. Eleanor was at a loss how to make Nannie aware of it all, and asked for Gerald's advice.

"Well, Eleanor, I should simply leave it to time and the fittest moment. You will know that when it comes. Mrs. Moore may live for many years. If this trouble has passed from her mind, as you say it appears to have done, her last years will be so quiet and unruffled she may keep Nannie out of Kilrogan inheritance for a good while. Meantime, my dearest, it will make your leaving the old aunt much easier for us all. Then, I think, it will be right for Nannie to know her proper position here."

And, after all, it had fallen to Nannie's lot to tell Mrs. Moore of the attack on Gerald's life, of his presence in Kilrogan, and his long sickness. She smoothed it over in the telling as much as possible, making it appear rather as an accident easily cured. Mrs. Moore's

quiet and almost childish indifference to outward events made Nannie's task much easier.

"Weel, Nannie, it's for yersel' to see to the house an' them 'at ye tak intil it, for ye know now 'at all's comin' to ye at the last."

Nannie felt a sort of terror to see, as she thought, the rapidity with which "th' ould madam's" mind was giving way.

"It'll be Miss Eleanor she's thinkin' about," she said to herself. "Lord be praised! there'll be right an' justice done to her, at all events. I must tell her as soon as iver she can listen to me."

Nannie had to wait for many days for that opportunity, for this odd speech of Mrs. Moore's had been made to her in the earlier time of Gerald's illness.

Mrs. North, with her faithful lieutenant, Miss Irwin, and the children, had returned from their sea-side holiday. Mr. North brought the news to Gerald and Eleanor as they were sitting in the orchard, and a note for Mr. Rohan, which he, at Mr. North's request, read immediately:

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND" (it began),—"I am coming to-morrow to see you. It would be absurd to attempt in a note congratulations, condolences, and all manner of fair speeches, such as your late adventures and your happy expectations demand. Will my dear Miss Crawford also receive me, and let me wish her joy of having so materially helped (as the doctor tells me she has) to nurse you back to the life which I am sure you cannot make a better use of than the one which you intend—the devotion of it to her sweet self? I shall bring the carriage, and take you

both back with me for a long afternoon with us all. I have Dr. Fleming's sanction for it. Your sincere friend,

"EMILY A. NORTH."

"Out of bitter, sweetness," murmured Gerald to himself, as he handed Eleanor the note with a smile, remembering his last conversation with his fair and prudent friend. Nevertheless, he was very glad to find what an amicable attitude she had chosen to assume, glad to shield his love from any slight or sting, great or little; and Mrs. North's welcome of his bride to her "class" would be useful as influencing the ladies of his own county. Eleanor, too, wisely accepted the proffered olive-branch. Her mind was always too full of healthy interests to keep account of petty annoyances, and only a very faint shadow of Mrs. North's unkind manner and speech at their last meeting remained with her. Mr. North was empowered to take back a ready acceptance of the visit and the invitation to return to the villa; and the morrow brought Mrs. North and Georgy, shy, but radiant with delight at being the friend of a real bride-elect. As to her mother, no shade of embarrassment was suffered to appear. She was the same sunny, genial friend and hostess she had been in the days of Eleanor's visit. It was a veritable holiday to Miss Irwin and the children to have Eleanor and Rohan with them again. Georgy took her tall brother Fred aside mysteriously.

"Fred," she began, solemnly, "they are going to be married! Fred, *you know* I told you it would turn out so!"

"Oh yes! just as if a girl can see a pretty young woman and a nice fellow within a mile of each other without

planning a love-affair and a wedding!" said Fred, from the superior heights of masculine logic. "The next thing, you'll be finding a wife for Frank Stanley, I suppose."

"No," answered Georgy, with a sudden blush, "he can look out for himself; besides, I don't think I had much to do with Miss Crawford's 'finding,' as you call it."

"And when is the wedding to be, Eleanor?—you will let me call you Eleanor, dear, will you not?" said Mrs. North, as they sat at the open window of the drawing-room after dinner—served much earlier in consideration of the invalid's ride home.

"I have not thought of it, indeed—the time, I mean," said Eleanor, with a deep blush. "The only step I have taken toward making any change in my life is the resigning of my position in Miss Henley's school."

"How glad you must have been to do that! What an escape you make from that drudgery!"

"I never felt it so, indeed, Mrs. North. I love, I always did love teaching, when I am free to teach according to my best ideas. And," she went on, with a little laugh, "what may appear still stranger to you, I found it very pleasant to eat my 'brown breid' after I had earned it, like Maggie in the Scotch ballad. You don't know how dignified and precious money can become till you feel it in your hand, the fair wages of honest work. I doubt if I shall ever quite reconcile myself to taking money even from—" her color deepened, and a sweet love-light filled her eyes—"from my husband."

Mrs. North almost groaned. The future mistress of Annadale talking about brown bread and wages earned!

Good heavens! what *were* people coming to?

Eleanor went on to speak of Rohan's project for the employment of the girls of his tenantry in the working of muslin. "I have been finding out all I could about it," she said—"it is really growing into an immense industry, and the women and girls from the very poorest classes are not only cleanly, prettily, and steadily employed, but are supporting themselves and often materially helping their families. If I can also combine with the occupation some elements of mental training and health, which I think are wanting now, to the embroidering schools, it will be just the work I wish for—just such work as I am sure Mrs. Rohan would have chosen to do. But to sit all day stooping and straining the eyes must be very bad, and in the end bad also for the 'sprigging,' I think the people call it."

Mrs. North laughed merrily. "That reminds me of meeting at the seashore a good fellow who brought us shell-fish," she said. "He told me, with the true Irish pride in a large family, that that morning there was a new arrival. 'And what is it, Thady?' I asked him—'boy or girl?' 'Oh! God be praised, 'tis a "sprigger," ma'am!' he said, with a delighted look."

Eleanor smiled. "Does not that justify my belief in the dignity of labor for woman when it is paid with money?" she said.

Eleanor could not know then that she was already touching the question which even in her own later day would

form the subject of grave debates and occupy the minds of wise statesmen—to its clear and happy solution, let us hope.

A little while passed among the pleasant family group in the drawing-room, and Rohan and Eleanor took their seat in Mr. North's carriage to return to Kilrogan. It would have been dark at that hour, for the evening falls early in September in Ireland, but the moon lit up the road and the hedges and fields. As they passed the lane where Gerald had so nearly met his death, Eleanor, for the first and only time since that night, gave way to strong emotions. She burst into a sudden violent weeping, which for a time was uncontrollable. Gerald could only hold her close to his heart and let the emotion exhaust itself.

"My love, my love! I believed that, in the very moment we had found each other so dear, I had forever lost you," she sobbed. "The horror, the agony of that belief, will leave a thrill of pain in my heart for all my life. Yet," she went on, as she grew calmer, "I might never have found out the depths of our love but for that awful hour; and oh, Gerald, Gerald! I found out, too, the heart and soul of the one to whom I had given my love! Oh! it was heaven to see that light of forgiveness and pity in your eyes as you denied the knowledge of that wretched man; for I knew you as noble and good as even my heart would have you!"

Could a lover have sweeter reward for suffering than Gerald reaped in that quiet moonlight ride to Kilrogan?





CHAPTER XLIV.

NANNIE GETS PROMOTION.

A FEW days later, and Gerald was sufficiently well to return to Annadale, where his presence was greatly needed. He took with him Eleanor's promise to be ready for their quiet wedding when he should return a fortnight thence. Dr. Fleming had counselled a few months' residence in some warm, quiet nook of France or Italy, and strictly enjoined on Eleanor the duty of accompanying him; but she needed no very great compulsion. It was not always so happily arranged for her to feel duty secondary to inclination, and now nothing in life could weigh against the importance of helping Gerald Rohan to leave his affairs at home in such order as they could accomplish, and then go with him, to think only of his perfect restoration to health.

The evening after Gerald had left Kilrogan, Mr. North, like the good friend he was, having offered to bear him company, Eleanor sat at her aunt's side, and again there was a bright fire in the grate, for the old madam was feeble, and felt the autumn chill. She had missed Eleanor much, for all her dependence on Nannie's care, and felt content at having her again near. Eleanor had made the fact of her approaching marriage at last clear to Mrs. Moore, and felt that in the sense

of loneliness which it had brought to her aunt's mind she would find the fittest opportunity of placing Nannie in her rightful relation to the solitary woman.

"Dear aunt, will you not let me bring Nannie in now, and tell her what she must soon know, and what will make you happier to have her understand?"

The old woman trembled. "She'll owe me a sair grudge, Eleanor, for keepin' her out o' her own so lang."

"Nay, indeed, you need fear nothing of that kind, aunt. Little Nannie has too big and loving a heart to keep enmity. I will answer for her. I may call her aunt, then?"

Mrs. Moore nodded, and leaned back in her chair, closing her eyes as if in pain. Just then Nannie brought in the tea-tray, having assumed that service since Mrs. Moore's illness.

"Nannie, my aunt and I want you to stay and have tea with us this evening. She will not have you go to the kitchen any longer."

Nannie set down the tray with a little jerk and start of surprise. Eleanor looked at her with curious interest, in the light of the revelation which was coming to her. Her own companionship, her care of the little handmaid's dress and person, had developed

in Nannie many attractive qualities. She was neatly dressed; as a plain Methodist would consider, quite sufficiently for any lady. Her fine and abundant hair, of a deep brown, was carefully if plainly arranged; her round little face was pleasant to look on, with its healthy color, white teeth, and bright, intelligent eyes. "A better representative of the Moores than ever poor aunt was," thought Eleanor, "God bless her faithful soul!" She thought of all she had been to herself, her father, and her mother, in her life of unselfish and noble, because loving, service; and she felt it no slight addition to the happiness of her own lot to know Nannie Moore, as she must now call her, placed in comfort, and exalted to a station much higher than any to which the little woman would ever have aspired, but not too exalted for her worth or her capacity to fill well and worthily. The slight meal passed over in silence almost, Eleanor pondering on how she could best unfold the tale of her birth to Nannie. When they sat in the light of the bog fire-roots, Eleanor took Nannie's small brown hand in hers, and began, with a little shake in her voice,

"You must try to take my place here now, Nannie; for Mrs. Moore wishes you to feel that you can be no longer a servant. Can you guess why, Nannie dear? Have you never thought you might have some rights in this house?"

Some hints let fall by old Peggy had given to Nannie a suspicion of something of the kind; but the dread of illegitimacy—a disgrace of the deepest dye among the lowly, respectable Irish—had made her hide such suspicion even from herself.

"Miss Eleanor, darlin', I'd rather not

know of it, even if I am somehow connected wid—" She looked at Mrs. Moore, who still remained quiet and silent.

"But, Nannie, it is nothing to be ashamed of; only poor aunty here feels that perhaps you will be angry with her for not telling you of it long, long ago, and for not keeping you here in your own home, instead of letting you live as our servant."

"If it was a slave, Miss Eleanor, I'd rather ha' been *that* to your darlin' mother an' yer own self than misthress of all Kilrogan."

"Eh, Nannie! that's jist what ye'll be, thin!" said Mrs. Moore, leaning forward. "Ye're the lawful daughter o' David Moore, my husband, an' his first wife, Aileen Humphreys. I was varra wrong an' ill doin' to ye—" She was going on, but Nannie stopped her hurriedly.

"God's sake, ma'am, say that again, an' bless ye for it!—the *lawful* daughter, ye said?"

"Yis, Nannie woman, pairfectly lawful, an' the rightful inhairiter o' Kilrogan."

"An' Miss Eleanor? No, no," said Nannie. "*She's* the one has a right to her mother's home-place. Don't tell me 'at a dawshy little thing like me is to step into her shoes. I'll not agree to it; I'll not stan' it at all."

"You can't help it, Nannie dear," said Eleanor, half laughing, half crying; "besides, you see, I would have to leave it all, now that I am going to be Gerald Rohan's wife. And it is all that makes me content to leave you and aunt here, knowing that you will be a good daughter to her, and the fit mistress of Kilrogan."

It took a long time for Nannie to accept the position of supplanter of

Miss Eleanor—that was the unpleasant thought that rose above all considerations of benefit to herself. Even her thankfulness and satisfaction at learning her mother's widowhood and her own respectable birth gave place to the distressing thought that she was depriving Eleanor of her lawful inheritance.

A few days reconciled her to the inevitable necessity of the position, and then she turned her thoughts to finding out how much of the personal property and the money which Mrs. Moore had wasted her life in hoarding could be by any legal possibility transferred to Eleanor.

Martha and Peter were made aware of the change in Nannie's lot. Peter took the news without much show of rejoicing. In his opinion, too, Eleanor was the one proper owner of the farm; but Nannie's accession was more agreeable than if a stranger had come.

Martha for a while felt a natural rebellion against submitting to the authority of one so lately in her own class, and meditated the acceptance of an offer of marriage from a "douce" man, a miller, and a good, old-fashioned Presbyterian like herself. But there was no hurry, and Kilrogan kitchen was not a bad place in which to reflect on future proceedings:

Nannie's claims to be the representative of "the old stock" were greatly advanced, in Peter's estimation, by her taking him into solemn council as how best to reach Mrs. Moore's lawyer.

"I think ye said, Peter, that she wint up to Dublin" (Dublin is "up" to the provincial Irish, no matter from what locality they regard it) "whin she had to see the lawyer. Now, I must go to him, wheriver he is, to see that Miss Eleanor gets what is her

own, now that she's goin' to marry so grand an' high a gentleman. It would ill fit us to let her go empty-handed to a house like his."

"Shure I'll be right glad to go wid ye, thin, Miss Moore"—Peter gallantly accorded Nannie her full honors.—"It wouldn't be right nor proper to let ye go alone."

Eleanor, overcome at last by Nannie's vehement entreaties, consented to find out whatever portion of money, silver, or other household valuables was of right her mother's share, and should now revert to her. Mrs. Moore aided in every way she could by giving up all legal papers, etc., and Nannie and Peter prepared to go to the great city, as it was in their rustic eyes. Eleanor, at her aunt's express desire, went with them also, to make such provision for her wedding outfit as time would allow; and for three days Mrs. Moore contented herself with Martha's attendance.

The journey to Dublin was in every way successful. The lawyer showed himself ready to fulfil Nannie's most generous intentions toward Eleanor. He was an old resident of Erna, and knew the Moore family history well. His satisfaction at knowing that Mrs. Moore's intended bequest of her unrighteously held possessions to the Presbyterian Society was to go to a worthier object, was not lessened by Eleanor's appearance or Nannie's. A little extra legal care and effort concluded the arrangements, and Eleanor had a handsome sum, the principal and interest of money saved by her mother's mother for her only daughter's benefit, put to her account in the Bank of Ireland.

The unravelling of this business brought to light another proof of Mrs.

Moore's avarice — dishonesty was a harsh word, and Eleanor spared it in her thoughts of the repentant sinner. The elder Mrs. Moore had intended to convey the money (always kept by her in the house) to her daughter before her own death, but she had failed to do so, Mrs. Crawford being far distant; and Mrs. David Moore, although she must have been morally certain of its intended use, had put it in bank, and allowed Mrs. Crawford to struggle through many a year of difficulty and privation which this money would have relieved.

But in the clear sky of her happy lot Eleanor would bring no cloud of

unforgiving remembrance. When the trio returned to Kilrogan, it was only peace and love which returned with them and met them there.

There were but ten days now till Gerald would return. Letters passed between Annadale and Kilrogan with wonderful frequency for even that time of much letter-writing, induced by the then new penny postage. Eleanor's preparations were far progressed, for Nannie had brought back from Dublin many "ideas," with which she illuminated the mind of the Erna dress-maker; and Mrs. North, too, took deep interest in the bride's proper equipment.

CHAPTER XLV.

POOR MISS RILEY.

THOUGH not in any way publicly proclaimed, the people of Erna were not long in hearing of Nannie's accession to the government of Kilrogan. It was a delightful alternative to the gossip of the "sisters" of the Wesleyan Society, for their minds and hearts had been heavily overtaxed with the weight of Eleanor's doings and darings. Meeting a gentleman at the very door of the chapel; allowing his attentions so soon after her poor father's death; concerned in her lover's shocking duel with an injured and revengeful tenant; taking him into the very house where she lived, and actually nursing and tending the wounded man herself! Seldom, indeed, had a more flagrant case called for spiritual and moral jurisdiction at "improving" tea-table or prayerful supper-party;

and now this wonderful romance about Nannie, and Eleanor's approaching marriage, came to cap the climax of the excitement. No wonder Miss Riley's store of comforting cordials and seed-cake was brought low, and Mrs. Quigley's tea-table well furnished with news-laden guests. It was as yet a moot question as to the recognition which should be extended to Nannie. True, she had been degraded by household service; belonged to a class quite beneath that of Miss Riley and Mrs. Quigley; but, then, she would be, nay, *was*, Miss Moore of Kilrogan, able to subscribe liberally to missions and "repairs," and the leaning was toward gracious admission into the circle of their society. "Christian sisterhood is a beautiful thing," piped little Miss Riley; "why should we refuse it to her?"

One evening, Nannie, on one of her many missions to the town in Eleanor's interests, was caught in a heavy shower just at Mrs. Quigley's door. The good woman saw Nannie, and was an hungry for the latest news from Kilrogan. What time so fit as the present to extend to Miss Moore the right hand of fellowship? She opened the door, and pressing invited Nannie to enter. "Come in, come in, Miss Moore: you'll find just a couple of friends dropped in to tea. Come in, I beg, and make a fourth." Nannie entered, not unwilling to gratify her curiosity as to the reception she would meet from the brother and sister. It was the Rev. Samuel Smiley and Miss Riley who sat cosily in Mrs. Quigley's front parlor, waiting for the tea and comforting accessories to the meal, the fragrance of which was already diffusing itself through the room.

The Rev. Samuel's greeting was of immense condescension, dignified and solemn. He presently took occasion to deliver a little homily of warnings against being puffed up with pride, setting affections on things of this life, giving Satan entrance through carelessness of the soul's precious privileges in neglecting class-meetings, revivals, and opportunities of contributions. Little Miss Riley's welcome to Nannie was kind, and would have been even more so, but that the minister's and Mrs. Quigley's eyes were upon her, restraining her within bounds of strict propriety in the degree of consideration extended to Nannie. Their inquiries after Eleanor were anxious and numerous—Mr. Rohan's estate and fortune—Mrs. Moore's intentions with regard to herself. It needed all Nannie's keen native wit and power of ready answer to frustrate their curios-

ity, while according such crumbs as served to whet the appetite, and keep her in amicable relations with them.

When the tea was over, and the early stars again appearing after the shower, Nannie rose to leave. Miss Riley also declared her intention of going, as their way was the same for some distance. A tender and meaning glance to the "minister" conveyed Miss Riley's mute invitation to accompany them, but the reverend gentleman felt himself *well*, as the French say, in the widow's parlor, and ignored the appealing glance. Nannie and Miss Riley left the house. A few steps from it the maiden "sister" stopped. "Would you mind waiting just a minute here, Miss Moore?" she said. "I think I've forgotten my purse at Sister Quigley's." Nannie stopped, and Miss Riley returned. In a few minutes she rejoined Nannie, her cheeks flushed, her lips quivering, her eyes too angry to let the tears pass them.

"Just as I suspected! just as I *knew*!" she said, breathlessly, and taking Nannie's arm. "That artful, hypocritical widow was sitting with her head—yes, her very widow's cap—on his shoulder, while my—the young preacher's arm was wickedly wound round her waist—as far as it could *get* round!" she said, spitefully. "And after what has passed between him and me!" she went on, the shower at last falling from her eyes. "Yes, indeed, Miss Moore—I don't mind telling *you* that Mr. Smiley's attentions have been *very, very* marked and particular to me. Oh, dear, dear! The depravity of human nature—in the sacred guise of the ministry, even! Alas! alas!"

Nannie had much ado to put on a properly grieved and sympathetic as-

pect. She saw Miss Riley to her own door and bade her good-bye, promising to call on her after all the important doings of the wedding and departure

of Eleanor should be concluded. Many a merry little burst of laughter issued from her lips as she stepped briskly homeward.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ADIEU, KILROGAN!

GERALD ROHAN, after a fortnight of incessant occupation in the interests of his tenants and his own estate, returned to Erna. This time he was the guest of Mr. North, for the proprieties of class exacted a formal separation of dwelling before the wedding between the contracting parties. A comfortable carriage, unused since Mrs. Rohan's death, had been newly fitted and prepared for travelling, and in this Gerald arrived. He found a note from Lady Ennismore, begging him, as a favor to her age and her increasing inability to leave home, to call with his bride when they should have set out on their homeward journey:

"Prophets and fortune-tellers always like to have a prediction verified to their eyes, and you will indulge me by showing me how wise I was in describing your wife. Send me word at what time I shall expect you to luncheon, and I will arrange it to suit your travelling convenience."

Mrs. North received by the same messenger an invitation to a lunch (the old lady was too old-world in speech and manner to call it breakfast), and Mrs. North, not sorry, perhaps, to get rid of the *déjeuner* she had, at Mr. North's suggestion, purposed to proffer to the bride and groom, only waited for their acceptance of the invitation of Lady Ennismore to add her own.

When Gerald's happy meeting with his bride had quieted into a full discussion of the morrow's proceedings, he showed Lady Ennismore's invitation to Eleanor. "You will not object to going to the old lady, since she cannot come to us," he said. "Indeed, I think it is a sort of duty we owe to our other friends—particularly Mrs. North, as it will forever set her mind at rest on any little doubts which she may have as to your position in 'good society.'" Eleanor, too busy and too much preoccupied to object to having the question settled for her by Gerald, complied, and it was decided that the visit to Ennismore should be paid.

They were married in the church of Erna—"As handsome a couple as ever came to the altar-rails," the spectators said. Georgy was the bridesmaid, young Stanley the groomsman: Mr. North took the place of Eleanor's father and gave the bride away.

Nannie, in her gray silk and white bonnet, stood near Eleanor, but refused utterly to take the place which, as cousin of the bride, had been offered to her and pressed on her by Eleanor—"She was me nursling—me young lady—me mistress. I had me heartful o' joy out of her all her life, but I couldn't stand beside her as her equal—not now nor for many a year to come," she said to Gerald. "Maybe, sometime I may

grow more fit to take such a place and be called cousin to her."

They returned to Kilrogan only long enough to make the necessary change of dress for travelling, and for their loving and sad, yet hopeful, adieus to the old woman—now how changed from what she was at the time when she and Eleanor had first met! Nannie would not distress her darling by giving way to her grief. She kept that for the little room henceforth to be her own, where that night on her knees she prayed for blessings on the young wife and her chosen husband, and humbly sought for wisdom and goodness to help her in her own new life.

That she would never marry was her firm resolve. Eleanor should have Kilrogan at last, or Eleanor's children. "And I can keep the old place so bright and homelike that she'll always like to come back to it for a while, even if her new home is so much grander," she thought.

Mrs. Moore, with soft, white drapery of cashmere and lace about her pale, withered face, leaned on Nannie's arm and stood at the gate. Peter, in festive attire, and Martha, in her handsome new silk—Eleanor's gift—stood near, and sent Gerald and Eleanor Rohan on their way, followed by loving looks and tones of farewell.

At Ennismore they were met at the wide, lordly gate by children holding great bunches of flowers. Flowers and laurel branches made arches and strewn the way. At the castle door stood Lady Ennismore, to receive them in state. The Norths, Miss Irwin, and Georgy, with the groomsman, and Dr. Fleming, were before them. A letter and a set of pearls from the Stanleys, mother and daughters, awaited Elea-

nor. It had come with Frank Stanley, and Mrs. North had kept it back until they should meet at the castle—"To heighten the effect," she said, "and make it quite like a delightful story." The entertainment which Lady Ennismore had called a lunch was really a *fête*, very beautiful, and very elegantly arranged. "You won my heart for your bride and yourself," she said to Gerald, "that morning you came for the flowers, for it was so like what your father would have done."

After the repast was finished, Lady Ennismore, leaning on Eleanor's arm, took her into the conservatory, where she repeated with great zest her conversation with Rohan the day of his begging-visit. "You justify my faith and fulfil my prophecy, my dear," she continued, "and so, of course, you will have to remain a special favorite and *protégée* of the old seeress."

"How can I say a word of fitting thanks for your goodness and sweetness to us, my lady?" said Eleanor, deeply touched, and grateful from her heart for this signal recognition of her as Gerald Rohan's wife. "I know, of course, that it is to *him* it is due; but at least I can try to earn in future a little of your gracious kindness on my own account."

"My dear, you are pretty and sweet, and brave and honest, and well deserve I should like you for yourself as I do; but I will tell you a little heart-secret, which an old woman need not be ashamed of, after half a lifetime. Eugene Rohan was my love, and might have been my husband, had we met in time. Do you wonder now that I like to do this for his son?"

"She is beautiful and aristocratic enough to have mated with the Rohans in their palmiest days," she said

to Mrs. North, while her eyes rested on the bride with delight. "It is God's mercy to the race to send it this infusion of fresh life and honest, wholesome blood. Gerald Rohan could

have won no bride more worthy of him and his name than this lovely young woman, even though she be, as you took such care to tell me, only a preacher's daughter."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE CUP OF BLISS.

IN the few weeks of their stay at Annadale, Eleanor Rohan learned enough of the place, the farms, and their tenants, to supply her with groundwork for all her future plans regarding them. Although it was most desirable that they should reach winter-quarters before the depth of the season should have come, they would not leave until the well-being of all their friends and dependents had been made as secure as possible for the winter; and with some assistance from Brian M'Manus and one or two other respectable tenants, Rohan was able to do this. And Eleanor made the first little move toward the formation of her embroidery school by teaching Tessy as much of the art as time would allow, and getting her to promise that she would, through the winter, gather round her the young girls of the neighborhood, to learn to do the simpler parts of such work as Eleanor procured for them.

In the little town of Méran, a sheltered nook of the Austrian Tyrol, Gerald Rohan and his wife passed the first four months of their married life. Thence, at the earliest dawn of spring, they went to Venice, Florence, and Rome. Gerald's health fully restored, and Eleanor passing through the lovely land with eyes, and mind, and soul,

feasted and satisfied with the beautiful things she saw, it was one delicious dream of joy, in which she often asked herself what she had been or done to have it granted to her.

Perhaps she learned even more the full value of the happiness it brought to her in the after-years of laborious, conscientious work in her husband's home, when it was a perpetual rest and help to her to look back on these happy days.

The primroses were wide open, and the *may* whitening the fields and hedges, when they came home. Annadale was as charming then to the eyes of Gerald and his wife as it had been to his father's young bride; but Eleanor had a great advantage over her, for she had the hearty, earnest help and co-operation of her husband to count upon in every scheme for the good of their people.

The school for embroidery was soon opened, with every aid to instruction, not in that only, but other and better knowledge, which Eleanor could procure. Tessy M'Manus proved an apt "sprigger" and a clever teacher of it. She was Eleanor's right hand in her school, and in all her doings and teachings among the women and girls of Annadale and Monhill; these all soon

justifying that inveterate teacher and preacher of the dignity of *paid* labor in the reformations in dress, manners, and ways of living which wages honestly earned speedily brought about.

When Eleanor's baby was born, the heir to Annadale, Tessy brought her offering of the beautiful robe on which no hand but her own had been permitted to do the tiniest bit of "sprigging."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

VARIOUS SETTLEMENTS.

GERALD EUGENE ROHAN was but a year old when the awful scourge of famine, the memorable potato famine of '48, swept over poor, desolated Ireland; but in Annadale it was received with such prompt remedies, such wise prevision, that it passed with comparatively slight effects. Still, it strained every resource, every capacity of self-denial and economy of the landlord and his wife to tide it over; and plain and simple as Eleanor's habits had been in her early home, they were no more so then than now while mistress of the handsome house of Annadale, its beloved and revered lady and queen.

The years of the next decade brought prosperity to Gerald's estate, as they happily did to much of the country. The political troubles and miseries which convulsed the people were over; manufactures increased and flourished; industry and thrift came to the diminished population, and replaced the misery of former years with comfort and hope.

And Denis Kiernan came back—a hurried visit to home and Rathlinn, just as suddenly followed by a departure for Australia again, for he found that the shadow of a hope which had haunted him was indeed but a shadow—that Tessy might possibly relent, and

come with him to the flourishing sheep-farm of which he was master.

Tessy turned from the first suggestion which he took courage to make of such a choice with the one word "Never!" And Kiernan, convinced that such decision was without appeal, with more philosophy than sentiment, took a wife ignorant of his past, and appreciating his present better than Tessy—the sister of Winifred Moriarty, who had *not* been the disguised girl in the lodge-meeting in the barn.

When Mrs. Moore had closed her quiet eyes on the world whose hold was once so strong upon her, Eleanor went to Kilrogan. She had visited her aunt as long as the old madam had manifested pleasure in her society, or even recognition of her presence; but the last few months of her life were a gradual sinking to sleep of all mental power, and Nannie would not summon Mrs. Rohan to be present at her death. It happened when Eleanor had been married some seven years, and a lovely group of children was gathering round her. Martha had married long ago, and gone to her miller's comfortable home. Peter, always busy and gradually gaining intelligence, and experience, and knowledge of good farming,

was Nannie's main-stay in all matters of cultivation, harvesting, and selling of the crops; the little mistress of Kilrogan supplementing with her shrewdness and cleverness what she habitually considered as the natural want of "gumption" in Peter and all his sex.

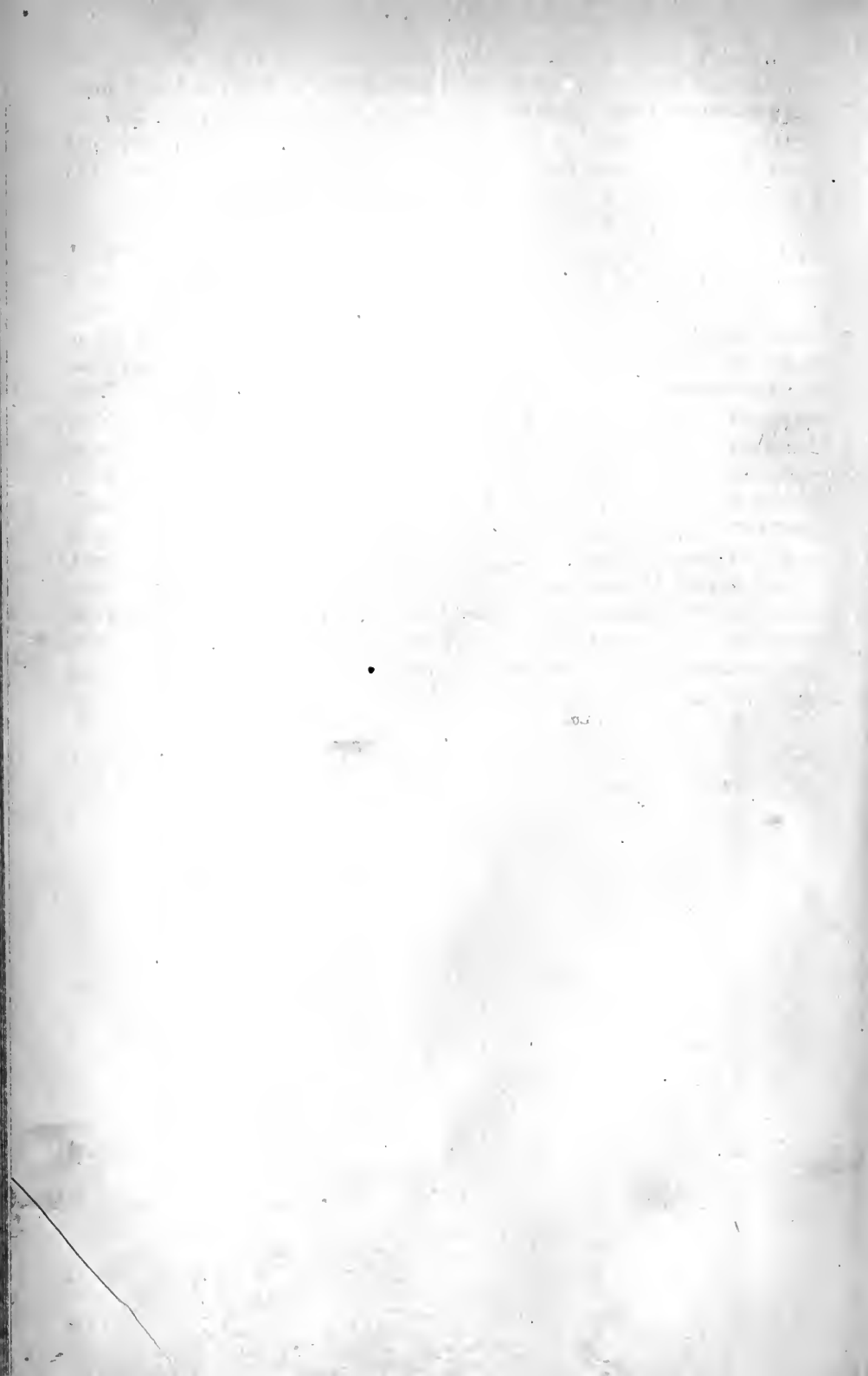
At the opening of Mrs. Moore's will, made in the year of Eleanor's marriage, it was with real pleasure that Nannie found she had left a sum to Peter which enabled him to rent and "set up" a farm adjoining Kilrogan; and then the secret of Peter's untiring industry and improved manners and appearance came out, for he went straight to Rathlinn Farm and laid heart, and hand, and good-fortune at the feet of Tessy McManus.

Tessy married him, and was—happy ever after? Well, at least she found a devoted husband, to whom she could give an honest, true, wifely love and duty. If the dream of her youth


sometimes came to her remembrance, she kept its romance and wild devotion only to sober it down into the truest love and most glad service to the wife of the man whom she had once worshipped as a far-off, starlike demi-god.

In her neighbor Nannie, Tessy found a good and wise friend; and when Rohan, and Eleanor, and the children came to visit the old cottage of Kilrogan, there was a welcome from Nannie Moore and from Tessy O'Brien which never failed to bring back their spring-time and love, with the suffering all softened, and hallowed, and faded into the past, to the memory and hearts of Gerald Rohan and Eleanor, his wife—the crown and flower of womanhood, whom he had found in the Preacher's Daughter, who had brought back the light of truth and the sweetness of its early days to the old homestead of Kilrogan Cottage.





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THE LAST OF THE HADDONS

A Novel

By MRS. NEWMAN

AUTHOR OF "JEAN" &c.



NEW YORK
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11

THE LAST OF THE HADDONS.

CHAPTER I.

INCONGRUOUS MATERIALS.

"NO. 81. Yes; this must certainly be the house," I murmured, turning my eyes somewhat disappointedly toward it again, after consulting an address in my hand. A large, gloomy, dilapidated-looking house, in a respectably dull street in Westminster, its lower windows facing a dead-wall, and its upper ones over-looking venerable ecclesiastical grounds. The lower rooms appeared to be the only portion of the house which was occupied; and, to judge by the shabbiness of the blinds, they were kept but in a mean condition. None the less dreary was the present aspect of the house for the suggestions of by-gone prosperity in the noble proportions of the entrance, with its link extinguishers on either side, and great massive doors opening from the centre. It would require a vivid imagination to picture those doors flung hospitably open, and light and warmth from within streaming down on to a gay party of the present generation, alighting before the broad steps.

"Not very promising," was my mental comment, as I gathered courage to ascend the steps and lift the heavy iron wreath of flowers which used to be considered high art in the way of knockers. I suppose I chanced upon the one least in use—a rusty, ill-conditioned old knocker, which would not do anything until you got determined with it, and then came down with a sudden bang, which resounded through the neighborhood. I was beginning to think that I had made a mistake, and that the house was uninhabited, after all, when I heard footsteps within, and presently one of the doors was opened a few inches, and a bony hand thrust out.

"A pretty time this to be bringing coffee that was wanted for breakfast!"

"Does Mr. Wentworth live here?"

A tall, thin, grim-visaged woman looked out, and shortly replied,

"Yes, he does."

"Is he at home? Can I see him?"

"He's at home," she slowly and reluctantly admitted; adding, as she determinedly blocked up the door-way, "but he can't see anybody; he's engaged."

"Please give this card to Mr. Wentworth, and say—"

"If it's the advertisement, you should have come before. Ten to twelve was the time."

"Please give this card to Mr. Wentworth, and—"

"It won't be any use."

"—And say that I shall be greatly obliged if he will see me for five minutes."

Evidently this was a woman accustomed to have her way, at any rate with such callers as came there. The very novelty of my persistence seemed for the moment to disconcert her, as she eyed me from beneath her bent brows before replying,

"Haven't I just told you?"

"Please to give this card to Mr. Wentworth, and say I shall be greatly obliged if he will see me for five minutes."

She appeared for a moment undecided as to whether she would shut the door in my face or do my bidding; then ungraciously moved aside for me to pass into the hall, which I unhesitatingly did. Mumbling something to herself, which, to judge by her countenance, was the reverse of complimentary to me, she left me standing on the mat, and went into a room on the right of the square hall, the stone floor of which was sparsely covered here and there with old scraps of carpet. I had just time to note that, poor and forlorn as everything looked, it was kept scrupulously clean, when I heard a man's voice, and the words,

"Did I not tell you?" uttered in a stern, low voice.

"I know you did; and I told her, but she wouldn't take 'No' for an answer."

"Nonsense! Say I'm engaged; it's past the time. I have almost arranged with some one already. Get rid of her somehow, and do not disturb me again. I thought you prided yourself upon your ability to keep off intruders."

"This one isn't like the others," grumbled the old woman. "She goes on hammering and hammering. However, I'll soon send her off now."

A nice introduction this! I had not really believed that she was acting under orders, and had too grave a reason for desiring an interview to allow a disagreeable old woman to prevent my obtaining it. I felt that an apology ought to be made before I was "sent off." Advancing to the door of the room from whence the voices came, and standing on the threshold, I said,

"Allow me to exonerate your house-keeper, sir" (it was really a pretty compliment to give

that gaunt personification of shabbiness so sounding a title, and she ought to have been touched by it). "I am afraid I was more pertinacious than are the generality of intruders, in my anxiety to obtain an interview."

A gentleman sat facing me, frowning down at my card. A pen still in his hand, and the quantity of papers and pamphlets covering the large library-table at which he sat, seemed to show that it had been no mere-excuse about his being engaged. A tall, broad-chested man, with a fine massive head, and good, if somewhat rugged features, looking at first sight, I fancied, about forty years of age. I saw that there were a great many books in the room, and two or three fine specimens of old carved furniture, in curious contrast with the small square of well-worn and well-mended carpet at the end of the room where he sat.

At the sight of me he laid down his pen, and pushed his chair back from the table, ruffling up his already sufficiently ruffled-up hair with a look of dismay which was almost comical. As he appeared somewhat at a loss how to answer me, I added, "I set out immediately I read the advertisement, and I hope you will excuse my being thirty-seven minutes late," looking at my watch in order to be quite correct as to time.

A smile, which had a wonderfully improving effect upon him, dwelt for a moment on his lips, and remained in his eyes.

"Will you take a seat, Miss—Haddon?" consulting my card for the name. Then, to the old woman, "You need not wait, Hannah."

Throwing a look over her shoulder at him, as though to say, "I told you," she went out and shut the door.

He placed a chair for me, then returned to the old-fashioned library-chair he had risen from, and courteously waited for me to begin. So far good—he was a gentleman.

"I will be as concise as possible. Mr. Wentworth, I am seeking a situation of some kind, and can, I think, offer as good testimonials as any one who has not had an engagement before could have. If you have not yet decided upon engaging any particular lady, I shall be much obliged by your kindly looking through these," taking a little packet of letters from my pocket, and placing it upon the table before him.

He was eying me rather curiously, and I earnestly went on,

"I have been accustomed to use both my brains and hands, and I would do my very best with either to earn a respectable living."

"I fear that I am committed in another direction," he said, courteously.

"In that case, I can only hope that the lady upon whom your choice has fallen needs an engagement as much as I do," I replied, trying to stifle a sigh.

"I am extremely sorry that you should be disappointed."

"You are very kind" (for I felt that he really was sorry); "but I am accustomed to disappointments; and there is a sort of poetical justice in this, after intruding upon you as I have done," I said, trying to speak lightly.

"I am very sorry indeed," he repeated.

"Pray do not think of it, Mr. Wentworth," rising from my seat. "Allow me to—"

"A moment, Miss Haddon. It is of the first

importance to find the right lady willing to undertake the office, and, to be candid, I do not feel quite sure that I have succeeded."

"But if you are committed?"

"I have been considering that, and I do not think that I am wholly—only so far as having promised to communicate with one lady goes. For the moment, I could not arrange matters with my conscience. Out of a number of ladies who were good enough to notice the advertisement, only one appeared to me at all suitable. But," he added, apologetically, "I ought to explain that the requirements are of a somewhat exceptional character."

"May I ask what they are, Mr. Wentworth?"

"Principally tact in dealing with incongruous materials, and the exercise of a healthy influence over a sensitive girl."

"Tact in dealing with incongruous materials," I repeated, musingly. "Yes; certainly I ought to know something about that."

Our eyes met, and we both broke into a little laugh, as he said,

"Most of us have opportunities for acquiring a little experience of the kind."

"And I think I will claim to have made use of my opportunities," I rejoined, after a moment or two's deliberation. "But the healthy influence over a sensitive girl," I went on, more doubtfully; "people hold such very opposite opinions as to what is a healthy influence. I certainly should not like to have my own weaknesses petted."

"You have been accustomed to training?"

"I have been accustomed to be trained, so far as circumstances could do it, Mr. Wentworth," I returned, with a half-smile at the thought of all that was implied by my word. I could not enter into my history to him; I could not tell him what I had resigned in order to remain in attendance upon my dear mother. Indeed, she had been a confirmed invalid so long a time that the giving-up had ceased to cost anything, the dread of losing her having become my only trouble, though year by year the difficulty of getting the little luxuries she needed and keeping out of debt had terribly increased. When the parting came, it took something from the bitterness of regret to think that she knew nothing of the difficulties which had beset us. "Still," I added, desirous of making the best of myself, and led on by his evident anxiety to select the right kind of association for his child, or whoever she was, to be as frank as himself, "mine has been an experience which ought to be worth something. One's experiences are hardly to be talked of; but I honestly think you might do worse than engage me, if it is any recommendation to have been accustomed to struggle against adverse circumstances, as I think it ought to be. My testimonials are from the clergyman of the parish, the medical man who attended my dear mother during a long illness, and an old friend of my father's. The last is more complimentary than could be wished; but the two first gentlemen knew me during a long, heavy trial, and, as I begged them to do, they have, I think, stated only what is fair to me."

He was smiling, his eyes fixed upon me; and I went on, interrogatively,

"It is a chaperon and companion for a young girl required—your daughter or ward, I presume?"

He laughed outright; and then I saw he was younger than I had at first supposed him to be. At most he could not be over thirty-five, I thought, a little confused at my mistake.

"No relation, and, I am glad to say, no ward, Miss Haddon. I am simply obliging a friend who resides out of town, in order to spare both him and the ladies replying to the advertisement unnecessary trouble by seeing them here. To say that I have regretted my good-nature more than once this morning would of course be impolite."

"It must have been very unpleasant for you sitting in judgment over a number of women," I said; "almost as unpleasant as for them."

"Pray do not think that I have ventured so far as that, Miss Haddon," he returned, with an amused look.

But I had not gone there to amuse him, so I simply replied,

"I think you were bound to do so, having undertaken the responsibility, Mr. Wentworth;" and returned to business, asking, "Do you think there is any chance for me?"

"I think that you would be admirably suited to the office, Miss Haddon. Mr. Farrar is an invalid; and his daughter, for whom he is seeking a chaperon, is his only child, and motherless. That may excuse a little extra care in selecting a fitting companion for her, which every good woman might not be. There is only one thing—" He trifled with the papers before him a few moments, and then went on, hesitatingly, "The lady was not to be very young."

Greatly relieved, I smiled, and put up my veil.

"I am not very young, Mr. Wentworth. I was nine-and-twenty the day before yesterday."

It would be really too ridiculous to be rejected on account of being too young, when that very morning I had been trying to lecture myself into a more philosophic frame of mind about the loss of my youth, and failed ignominiously. The loss of youth meant more to me than it does to most people.

"Then we will, if you please, consider that the only objection is disposed of," he gravely replied.

"I am very glad. Only," I thought, "you have not examined my testimonials. For one so cautious in some respects, you appear rather lax in others."

But I put them on the table before him. His friend might desire to see them, though he did not.

"Am I to write to your friend, Mr. Wentworth?"

"I was to ask you to go to Fairview as soon as you conveniently could, Miss Haddon," presenting me with a card upon which was the address—Mr. Farrar, Fairview, Highbrook, Kent.

"To make arrangements with Mr. Farrar?" I inquired, not a little surprised at the suddenness with which matters seemed to be settling themselves.

"To remain, if you are willing so to do, Miss Haddon. But I ought to state that the engagement may possibly be for only a limited period—not longer than a year, perhaps. Miss Farrar is engaged to be married."

"Ah, now I understand your anxiety about her finding a suitable companion," was my mental comment.

"She will not leave her father in his present state of health; but in the event of his recovery, there is some talk of her marriage in a year or so."

"I do not myself desire a long engagement, Mr. Wentworth," I replied, with a slight pressure of a certain locket on my watch-chain. If the illusions of youth were gone, certain things remained to me yet.

He looked a little curious, I fancied, but simply bowed—too much a gentleman to question about anything not connected with the business in hand.

"Was there any mention made of salary, Mr. Wentworth?"

"Salary? Oh yes. I really beg your pardon. Something was said about eighty or a hundred a year; but there were no restrictions about it. You will find that Mr. Farrar is—"

Whatever he was about to add, he hesitated to say it; and after a moment's pause, substituted the word—"liberal. He is a man of large means, Miss Haddon."

"Eighty pounds a year certainly is liberal," I replied, rather surprised at the amount; and, in my inexperience of such matters, not taking into account the appearance a chaperon would be expected to make. The little I had hitherto been able to do in the way of money-getting had brought but very small returns. But then it had been done surreptitiously, while my dear mother was sleeping. She had been too anxious about me to be allowed to know that her small pension did not suffice for our expenses; and mine had been such pay as I could obtain from the shops in the neighborhood. "I did not hope for anything so good as that," I added, as I once more rose, and bade him good-morning, begging him to excuse my having taken up so much of his time. "But, in truth, I was getting almost desperate in my sore need, Mr. Wentworth."

"I can only regret that a gentlewoman should be put to so much inconvenience, Miss Haddon; although it bears out my creed, that gentlewomen are more capable of endurance than are their inferiors."

All very nice and pleasant of him; but even while he spoke I was painfully conscious that I should have the greatest difficulty in getting out of the room as a gentlewoman should. The sudden revulsion—the great good fortune—coming so swiftly after bitter disappointment, told, I suppose, upon my physical strength, lowered by a longer fast than usual. In fact, a course of discipline in the way of bearing inconvenience was telling upon me just at the wrong moment; and it seemed that his pretty compliment about a gentlewoman's capability of endurance was about to be proved inapplicable to me. The furniture appeared to be taking all sorts of fantastic shapes, and he himself to be expanding and collapsing in the most alarming manner. But angry and ashamed as I felt—could anything be more humiliating than an exhibition of weakness at this moment?—I strove to smile, and say something about the heat, as with some difficulty I made my way toward the door.

"But I fear—pray allow me," he ejaculated, springing toward the door, where I was groping for the handle, telling myself that, if I could only get into the hall and sit there in the fresh air a few moments, all would be well again.

CHAPTER II.

SUCCESS.

"ONLY a little hungry."

Was it my voice making the humiliating confession? Had I lost my self-command and self-respect to such an extent as that? The words seemed to come from my dry lips independently of my will.

The ejaculations "Great heavens!" in one voice, and "I thought she looked a poor half-starved mortal!" in another, brought my stray senses back, and I looked about me. I was lying on a couch in a back sitting-room, smaller and more comfortable in appearance than that which I had first seen, Mr. Wentworth and his sour-looking servant watching me. A strong, unpleasant smell of burned feathers pervaded the room. As I afterward found, Hannah knew of no better remedy for faintness; and her master had hurriedly set light to a packet of quill pens, while she deluged my face and head with water.

"Bring some wine, and the best you have in the way of food, at once," said Mr. Wentworth.

She quitted the room; and her master considerably went toward the window, and stood there turning over the leaves of a pamphlet until she re-entered. She carried a tray, upon which was a glass of sherry, a small basin containing something which had a very savory odor, and some bread.

"Have you nothing better than that?" he asked.

"It's the strong gravy I was making for your chicken," she replied. "She couldn't have anything better than that upon an empty stomach."

I tried to utter a little protest; but I soon felt it was no use; I should never be able to get decently away without the little fillop which the food and wine would give me. So I took a few spoonfuls of the gravy and a little bread, trying to keep up appearances by saying that I had foolishly taken a very light breakfast, and so forth.

He accepted the explanation in an easy, matter-of-course way, saying he so frequently got into disgrace with Hannah on account of his want of appetite in the early morning that he could quite understand other people's shortcomings in the same way. Then he courteously expressed a hope that I should rest there until Hannah had prepared luncheon.

"There is no one in the house besides us three, and therefore you will not be disturbed. Quietness is about the only thing the old place has to boast of now."

"You are very kind," I murmured, at loss for words.

"In an hour or two, when you have had luncheon, and feel quite sure you are sufficiently rested, I will give you fuller particulars as to the best way of getting to Fairview. We shall meet there very shortly, I dare say, when I trust to hear that you approve of your new surroundings, Miss Haddon."

Then, touching my hand, and bowing low with old-fashioned courtesy, he quitted the room.

The old woman watched him with astonished eyes, and then turned them suspiciously on me. I could not help fancying that she was mentally repeating the words, "Meet there very shortly."

How weak I must have been to let this grim-looking, disagreeable old woman see the tears

which forced themselves into my eyes! I intuitively knew that tears and weakness were the very worst weapons to use with one of her calibre. I felt that she had in her heart declared war against me from the very moment I succeeded in obtaining an interview with her master, and, so to speak, set her at defiance. This was but an armed truce between us, if truce it was. In course of time I learned that there was another cause for her antagonism.

Her forbidding, suspicious looks had very soon the good effect of helping me toward recovery. Brushing away the tears which her master's kindness had brought to my eyes, I drank the sherry, set to work with the spoon again, and was presently able to eye her as steadily and speculatively as she eyed me.

"You will do now till lunch is ready, I suppose?"

"I shall do now without luncheon; in five minutes I shall be able to go. Will you please tell Mr. Wentworth so; and say if he will kindly send me the further instructions he spoke about, I need not disturb him again."

"You are going to meet again?" she said (I thought, rather offensively).

"Yes, I hope so. My bonnet, please. How wet you have made my hair!"

"I suppose it's most of it that new stuff that can be easily dried or replaced," she ungraciously replied, presenting my bonnet.

I did not take the trouble to vindicate my hair, simply using a towel which lay near, to press out the water as much as possible.

"I am sorry there is not a looking-glass in the room; but I can fetch one if you like."

I saw that this was meant for sarcasm, so pleasantly replied, "Yes, please."

"It's at the top of the house," she grumbled.

"In that case I will excuse you from fetching it," I replied, with amiable condescension.

She waited a moment to recover that, and then said,

"You are not going to stop to lunch, then?"

"No. Does that surprise you?"

"Yes; it does."

"Ah, that shows that you may sometimes be mistaken."

She seemed to hesitate a moment as to whether she should carry on the war or not; and then, I suppose, concluded to defer it, though she took unnecessary pains to show that it was only deferred, frowning angry defiance at me as she went out of the room.

She presently returned with the message that her master thought I could not be sufficiently rested, and hoped I would stay to luncheon, adding, with a grim smile, "He is not accustomed to ladies who are given to fainting; and does not know how soon they can sometimes get over it."

"Your master is very kind. But I must go now."

"If you would not be persuaded, I was to give you this."

"I am much obliged to him," I replied, taking the letter she offered; I really could not honestly add, "and to you;" but bade her good-day as pleasantly as I could. She opened the room door, and then the hall door, still, as it were, under protest, and with the same expression of disapproval on her face. "I suppose it is a disagreeable manner that is natural to her," I thought,

as I turned away. "She has not seen enough of me to form any opinion which might account for so decided an exhibition of ill-will."

I walked slowly to the park, where I sat down and rested awhile; then went on again toward home—if I could give the place I found shelter in so euphemistic a name—trying to get used to the idea of my good-fortune, and to think over the arrangements that had to be made for my flitting. But I was not yet equal to anything in the way of sustained thought, only conscious, in a pleasant, dreamy kind of way, that a heavy burden was lifted off my shoulders, and that life would be possible for the next few months without doing what it would have been worse than death to do, had I the right to choose between life and death.

But the fresh air was doing me good; and by the time I had reached the house where I lodged, situated in a by-street west of the park, I had begun to recover my mental equilibrium. But I fancy my first proceeding after reaching my room made Becky, the small maid who occasionally did errands for me, think that I had taken leave of my senses.

"A chop, and a sixpenny cake, and a quarter of a pound of best butter, and an ounce of tea and sugar!" she repeated, staring at me with widely opened eyes, while she ran over the items, pausing at each, as though to remind me of what I was doing.

"I am expecting company, Becky," I replied, with what was meant for a reassuring smile.

But Becky was not to be so easily reassured. "Then give them a penn'oth of shrimps, and keep the chop and the cake for yourself when they are gone," she earnestly advised.

"But it is some one I care very much for, Becky," I replied, "and I can quite afford it now—I can, indeed."

Very reluctantly she took the money, and went off with a grave face to do my bidding. Then I sat down with pencil and paper to make certain calculations. I possessed fifteen shillings and sixpence in money, my clothes, and a certain packet of my dear mother's old-fashioned jewelry, with a few words written on the outside to the effect that, in the event of either illness or death, the contents were to be sold to defray expenses. I had spoken truly enough in alluding to my sore need. I had had a hard fight for existence for five long weary months, during which time I had been able to obtain no better employment than such as was to be had from shops. Embroidery, screen-painting, wool-work, illuminating, I tried them all in turn, with very slight success in the matter of remuneration, "ladies" being, I found, looked upon rather suspiciously as workers, and as a rule expected to give a great deal more labor for small pay than do the "regulars," as they are called. This arises, or did arise—women are getting wiser in these days—from the false delicacy of a few, who preferred keeping up the fiction that they were only playing at work, and so deteriorated the value of gentlewomen as workers. I soon found that it was hopeless to expect to earn a living that way; and as I had not the experience in teaching which I believed to be necessary for a governess to have, there seemed little else to turn to, if I were not fortunate enough to obtain an engagement as companion. After the expenses

of my dear mother's funeral were paid, I found myself almost destitute; and though I had contrived to exist since, it was a kind of existence which could not go on much longer. And yet there was a bright future before me, if I could contrive to get through the next eight or ten months.

Eight years before the commencement of this story I was on the eve of marriage with Philip Dallas, and we were to set out on a voyage to Jamaica immediately afterward. Certain plantations there, belonging to his elder brother, were going to ruin for want of an interested overlooker on the spot. Edward Dallas did not wholly depend upon the property, and was not inclined to exile himself; but as he appeared still less inclined to advance his brother's fortunes in England, Philip and I agreed to go out and reside in Jamaica until he had made a competency, which we had every reason to believe might be done in the course of a few years. We were young (both one-and-twenty), and strong, and energetic; and hoped, by careful living, to be able to return in time to enjoy the best part of our lives in England. The one and only thing which caused us to hesitate was the dread of leaving my dear mother. But she would not hear of Philip sacrificing his prospects, or of my remaining with her. Unselfish as she was clear-sighted, she cheerfully assured us she would be more happy in the reflection that her child was the wife of a good man, and well cared for, than in keeping me by her side. She was so unmistakably in earnest that we felt we were really doing what would most conduce to her happiness in obeying her. She had her small pension, which quite sufficed for her needs; and, as she pointed out to us, she was altogether better situated than many mothers. There seemed every reason for hoping that she would live to a good old age, and we persuaded ourselves that we should be in England again in time to be a comfort to her declining years.

We had few friends, mother and I. Her limited means, and perhaps a little of the morbid sensitiveness which the refined poor are apt to acquire, prevented her moving in the society she was so well fitted for; and as years went by, she gradually drifted away from old associations without making new ones. By my father's family (in which he was the only son) she had never been much noticed; and after his death, which took place when I was a child, they entirely ignored her. She had accepted the position (which now entailed straitened means), and proudly kept aloof from them. It was perhaps natural enough that the Haddons of Haddon should not approve the marriage of an only son with the vicar's penniless daughter. The match was not, perhaps, a very prudent one, but they ought not to have forgotten that she was a gentlewoman. So little, however, did the loss of their favor trouble us that it had come to be a jest between my dear mother and me to threaten each other with the Haddons of Haddon when any little financial difficulty arose, a jest which made us more inclined to be satisfied with things as they were. We could imagine nothing more humiliating than being obliged to apply to the Haddons of Haddon for aid of any kind.

My modest trousseau was prepared, and everything packed ready for transport to the vessel in

which our passage was taken. It was the evening before our wedding-day, and Philip and I had been for a walk in a quiet, silent fashion of our own, taking farewell of the Old Country. We walked through part of the city, at peace in the soft summer moonlight after its day of unrest; and, turning into a church where evening service was going on, knelt down unseen in one of the high pews to join in the prayers. Then we turned our steps homeward—it would ever be home to us where my dear mother was—our hearts too full for words.

I was to spend the remainder of this last night alone with her; and, as we had previously agreed to do, Philip and I parted at the door. Ah, Philip! how good and true, how handsome you looked, as you stood there lingering to say a few last words before I entered the house!

“Our last parting, Mary. God bless you, dear wife. Try to make our mother believe what you will be to me; it will be her best comfort; and remind her of our agreement. No tears to-morrow.”

Ah, me! had sorrow not been too deep for tears there would have been nothing else on the morrow. I ran hastily up-stairs—we had secured comfortable lodgings with a respectable family for her—and opened the door, looking toward her accustomed seat as I half uttered some little loving speech—only half uttered it, and then broke down with a cry of alarm. My dear mother was lying on the floor in what, for the first few moments, I imagined to be a fainting-fit. Alas! it was more serious than that. Whether the cause was physical or mental, I know not: it is most probable that she had suffered more about the approaching separation between us than she herself would allow; but she was taken up a helpless and incurable invalid, who would never again be able to move from her couch. That was the fiat issued by the medical men on the bright May morning which was to have seen me a happy bride.

It was very hard for Philip; and, as might naturally be expected, he for a while found it difficult to accede to the sudden change in his prospects. But I knew he was not likely to blame me for acting as I did, after the first bitterness of disappointment was over. After a hurried interview with his brother, in which the latter insisted upon his keeping to his bond, and setting sail with or without me, Philip entreated me to go through the ceremony with him, and let him at least feel that he was leaving a wife, reminding me that I might soon be left alone; and in that case it would be so much easier for me to follow him as his wife.

My courage almost gave way. I was sorely tempted to yield. But the doctors had said that, though my dear mother might not live very long, there was just a possibility that she might linger for years. Fortunately, perhaps, I had too much difficulty with the two so dear to me to have any time for indulging and analyzing my own feelings. My dear mother might be excused for looking at the question only as it affected her child; and she entirely sided with Philip in wishing me to become his wife, since I insisted upon remaining with her. But I had to think for him; and strength was given me to act according to my perception. So long as my dear mother was spared to me, she must be my care,

and Philip must remain unfettered. That was my decision; and they could not turn me from it by any amount of persuasion. The following day Philip set forth alone, and I remained with my mother. If, in his disappointment, he was a little hard with me at the time, his first letter showed that he blamed me no longer.

I know now it never occurred to him that my mother's income might die with her. He had been content to take a penniless bride; and if he gave a thought to my mother's money, it was only to rejoice that she had enough until he could more amply provide for her. Pride, self-reliance, or perhaps a little of both, prevented my telling him at the last.

She lived nearly eight years after his departure. Philip was beginning to write hopefully of being able to return within the twelvemonth, and I tried to struggle on unaided. What I should have done had things come to the worst, I know not. There was Edward Dallas; but he was a hard man, who had taken a great deal more kindly to the delay than he had to our marriage, and I did not choose that he should know his brother's future wife required his charity. And there were the Haddons of Haddon, I told myself, with a forlorn attempt at the old jest.

Meantime, Philip's letters arrived regularly, full of life, and love, and hope. He had succeeded beyond his expectations. The estate had rapidly increased in value under his management. After he had been there a year, he was able to dictate terms to his brother, and had since acted as managing partner, with everything in his own hands. Before she died, my dear mother had the happiness of believing that Philip and I would soon be united and living in affluence. It was her greatest comfort to know that I never regretted my decision, and that Philip came in time to say that he loved and trusted me all the more for having kept to it.

As years passed on there had been observable in Philip's letters just the growth of mind which might have been expected in the man I had known at twenty-one. I, on my side, did my best to make my mental growth worthy of his. But of late, when I looked at the portrait in my locket of the fair, frank, almost boyish face of my lover, I was conscious of a certain uneasiness slowly but surely taking root in my heart, though I told myself that of course he could not look like that now. Did he also remember the years that had passed, when he looked at the portrait he had of me? Did he reflect that a woman of nine-and-twenty could no longer look like a girl? But these reflections disturbed me only occasionally, and were soon put aside as unworthy of the woman he loved. He loved *me*, so what mattered my age?

CHAPTER III.

FLITTING.

On opening the envelope sent to me by Mr. Wentworth, I found a five-pound note, and a few words to the effect that Mr. Farrar desired to do what was usual in the way of paying all expenses incidental to the journey, and so forth, which

might be incurred by the lady who accepted the engagement.

How can words express my appreciation of the good-fortune which had come to me? I sat thinking over it in deep thankfulness, realizing its blessedness in the sudden renewal of faith, and hope, and trust which it had brought to my fainting spirit. Then I presently recollected what had to be done, and went down-stairs and tapped at the door of the back parlor, which was my landlady's sitting-room.

I occupied one room at the top of the house at the modest rental of five shillings a week, slipping in and out on sufferance, as it were; and I had hitherto seen very little of Mrs. Sowler, sending down my week's rent and receiving the receipt by the small maid Becky. Becky had not yet arrived at the dignity of waiting upon the first or second floor lodgers; being only a drudge to the other servants, of whom I had seen as little as of their mistress. Indeed, I had no right to expect much in the way of attendance for the sum I paid. Such small services as I had received from Becky had been for the most part rendered from good-will, and, so to speak, surreptitiously, as was the little I had been able to do for her. There was a sort of freemasonry between us. We had been some little comfort to each other in a quiet way, and without injury to any one else; it being understood that complaining or ill speaking was undignified, and beneath people who knew how to endure. We simply helped each other to make the best of the position we found ourselves in.

Mrs. Sowler, who had been a lady's maid, had married the butler in the family she lived with, and they had invested their joint savings in furnishing a lodging-house. She was a very great personage in the eyes of Becky, who had great reverence for elegance of attire, and considered it quite natural to be "a bit set up when you were dressed better than your neighbors."

From the little I had seen of Mrs. Sowler, I judged her to be sufficiently "set up;" but that in no way offended me.

Obeying a request to enter, I opened the door and walked in. Mrs. Sowler had half risen from her seat; but at sight of me she sunk languidly back again.

"Oh, it's you, Miss—Miss—"

"Haddon," I smilingly suggested, taking a seat unbidden. "I have come to pay my next week's rent, and to say that I am going away and shall not require my room after to-morrow morning, Mrs. Sowler."

"Going away!" she repeated, in a somewhat raised voice. "I am sure you've had nothing to complain of here. Very few houses such as this let rooms at five shillings a week, with a Member of Parliament on the first floor, and a— Why, it's worth five shillings to any one who wants to be thought respectable to have letters addressed here! Not that it makes any difference. A paltry five shillings a week is not of much consequence to me, of course; and if you are not satisfied, you are quite welcome to go as soon as—"

"But I am and always have been satisfied, Mrs. Sowler. I can assure you I have quite appreciated the advantage of having a respectable shelter at so small a cost. It is not that—"

"Then what is it? I think I have a right to ask that much?" said Mrs. Sowler, looking as

though there was no exaggeration in certain rumors which had reached me to the effect that the partings with her lodgers were not always got through in the most amicable way. "If Becky has been saucy—"

"No, indeed: she has"—I was going to say, been extremely good to me; but reflected in time that Becky's goodness to me might not impress her mistress so favorably as it did me, so quietly added—"done quite as much for me as I had any right to expect. Mrs. Sowler, I am leaving simply because I have succeeded in obtaining a situation."

"A situation! Oh, indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Sowler, sinking languidly back into her seat again, graciously adding, "Well, you have conducted yourself in a quiet, respectable way since you have been here, and I hope you will do well."

"Thank you, Mrs. Sowler," putting down the money for the week's rent as I spoke.

"Good-evening; I will send a receipt up by one of the servants. And if Becky can be of any assistance in cording your boxes or what not, I have no objection."

"I am much obliged. Good-evening, Mrs. Sowler."

Having thus taken leave of my landlady, I informed Becky—who had returned with her purchases, still in a state of wonderment at my extravagance—of my intended departure.

"I thought there was something the matter!" she ejaculated, sitting down on the edge of my small bedstead and gazing forlornly at me, as the tears began to make for themselves a channel down the poor grimed cheeks.

"I have found a home, Becky," I said, gently.

"I know I ought to be glad, for you could never have bored going on much longer like this; but I can't be just yet. Oh, Miss Haddon, dear, it isn't your mending my stockings and things! Please don't think it's because of that."

"I do not think it, Becky. I am sure you care for me as much as I do for you, and we will both try to prove our friendship by sparing each other as much as possible at parting."

"You will soon find other people—lots."

"I shall find no one who will make me forget an old friend."

"Oh, miss, how can I be your friend?"

"You have been my only one here, Becky. But we will now put away sentiment, and try to make the most of the afternoon. You are to be my company."

"Me!"

"Yes. Go down to Mrs. Sowler, give my compliments to her, and say I shall be much obliged if she will kindly allow you to spend the rest of the day with me."

"No good," returned Becky, with a very decided shake of the head.

"Tell Mrs. Sowler that I have a dress and a few other things to spare, which we might easily alter to fit you," I replied, thinking that was the best way of appealing to Mrs. Sowler's feelings.

Becky had been taken from the miserable home of a drunken mother out of charity, as she was very frequently reminded, and was not as yet considered to have any claim to wages, depending upon such odds and ends in the way of clothes as fortune might bring her.

She was quick enough to see that I had hit

upon the best means of inducing her mistress to consent, and at once went down to make the request. It was graciously granted; and Becky presently returned with the front of her hair well greased, and her face red and shining from hasty friction with soap and water and a rough towel, which was as much preparation for being company as she had it in her power to make.

I had some little difficulty at first to induce her to share my feast. She resolutely turned her eyes away from the cake.

"I'm not hungry, thank you, miss."

But I soon succeeded in proving to her that I should enjoy it a great deal more with her assistance, and that much would have to be wasted without. "Think of having to throw plum-cake away, you know, Becky!"—plum-cake being an acknowledged weakness of Becky's. Her scruples once overcome, Becky and I feasted in good earnest, enjoying our strong tea and all the rest of it in the most convivial manner. She at first tried hard not to laugh at my little jests with, I fancy, the notion that laughter was not proper for the occasion. But I soon had her stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth, and burying her head in the bed, to prevent the sound reaching the other lodgers, in the old fashion. Such very small jokes did for Becky, and I was not going to have my first tea-party made flat and dismal. Afterward we passed a pleasant evening patching and contriving.

"Oh, Miss Haddon, do you think you'd better? Are you *quite* sure you can afford it?" again and again ejaculated Becky, quite overwhelmed by the magnificence of the gifts, and afraid I should afterward suffer for the want of such treasures.

I smilingly unlocked a couple of the largest boxes, and showed her the contents—my wedding outfit, which had remained untouched, so far as linen and so forth went, for eight years. Fortunately for me, the fashion seemed to be veering round again to that which it was when they were purchased, and the two dresses I had carefully preserved as too good for ordinary wear would serve me for best at Mr. Farrar's until money was due to me.

"They *are* clothes!" exclaimed Becky, looking in extreme surprise at the little heaps of linen and what not.

"What did you think my boxes contained, Becky?" I inquired, in some amusement.

"Well, we knowed you paid for everything you had; but missis said you'd never be living a'most upon dry bread if there was much left in your boxes; and as to their being heavy, master said bricks would do that!"

It was impossible to divest Becky's mind of the idea that I had suddenly become recklessly and extravagantly generous, as her heap of belongings increased; and when I added a small box to contain them, with a key, her gratitude knew no bounds.

"My very own! What's give me is my own; isn't it, Miss Haddon, dear?"

I was very decided about that.

"And if I was to run away in them, it would not be thieving, would it?"

"No; it would not be thieving. But I should be very sorry if you were to run away, for then I should not be able to find you, in case I am able to obtain a situation for you near me, by-and-by.

It would be wiser as well as braver to endure a little longer, Becky."

At which Becky screwed up her mouth, and gave me a little nod, which I knew meant enduring and staying.

Thus pleasantly was spent my last evening in the small room where I had many a time passed half the night anxiously speculating upon the chances of being able to earn sufficient to keep me. It had seemed but a forlorn-hope answering that advertisement without being able to offer any testimony of previous experience. But I was becoming desperate, knowing that, if I once began to sell my small belongings in order to obtain food, it would very soon be out of my power to accept an engagement, should one offer.

I set forth for the railway-station the next morning on better terms with myself and the world than I had been for many a long day, Becky and I comforting each other at parting with a smile instead of a tear, as we had agreed to do.

What was my new home going to be like? The only impression which had been conveyed to me about Mr. Farrar had been that he was rich and liberal. Mr. Wentworth had given me no clue to the character of either father or daughter, beyond saying that the former was liberal and the latter sensitive. Liberality seemed to speak for itself; but sensitiveness might or might not be a charm, according to circumstances. A refined, self-depreciative nature is not sensitive from the same cause as is a self-loving one; and unfortunately it is not the latter kind of sensitiveness which is least prevalent. But I comforted myself with the reflection that they must indeed be difficult to please, if one so desirous of finding a home as I was could not satisfy them.

CHAPTER IV.

FAIRVIEW.

THE station at which I stopped was about twelve miles from town, and I found that Fairview was distant a short drive from thence. I took the advice of the driver of a solitary fly in waiting, and engaged it to convey me and my luggage, instead of having the latter sent, and walking, as I had intended to do.

"They'll charge you eighteen-pence for the barrow up at Fairview, and I'll take you and the luggage too for two shillings, miss," said the man, in a fraternal kind of way, which seemed to indicate that he understood the cause of my hesitation, and put the case accordingly.

Very curiously did I gaze about me as the fly jogged slowly through part of a primitively built little village, and turned into a high-road, the ground rising the whole way. I caught sight of some exquisite bits of Kentish scenery, beautifully wooded hill and dale, with picturesque-looking homesteads dotted about it, and pictured to myself a delightful old family house to match the scene—a gable-end or millioned window appearing here and there amidst grand old elms, with rooks cawing about them. Dwelling upon this picture, I did not notice that we had left the main road and turned into a newly made one branching from it, leading to the top of a hill.

It was only as the fly turned sharply in at some

showy-looking lodge gates that an enormous structure of bricks and mortar—a modern palace—met my view. Even as I was driven round the sweep, something, which I then tried to persuade myself was its size and grandeur, but to which I now give a different name, jarred upon me, and dispelled all my rosy visions of a country home.

A man-servant came out to see to my luggage, looking somewhat surprised at my paying the driver myself, and methodically counting my boxes before ascending the steps. At the hall door I was received by another servant, and conducted to what he termed the library—a large and lofty room, furnished in costly modern fashion. "But where were the books?" I asked myself, gazing around. How jealously they were guarded, if they were kept in those closed and lined book-cases! There was not a book nor a paper to be seen, and all the elaborate appliances for study looked new and entirely unused. I could only suppose that Mr. Farrar had taken a dislike to the room, and gathered his favorite authors about him in some cosy study where ideas would flow more freely.

I sat waiting as patiently as might be, for about ten minutes, when the man-servant looked into the room:

"Will you come this way, if you please, miss?"

I rose and went across the hall, where he threw open a door and ushered me into a large drawing-room, gorgeous with amber satin hangings and gilded furniture, immense pier-glasses, and every conceivable expenditure in the way of decoration. Still no one to be seen! It almost looked as though I had been taken from room to room in order that I should be duly impressed with the Fairview grandeur. But I presently found that there were other things besides furniture in the room—beautiful works of art, collected from all parts of the world. Indeed, they were in such excess as to destroy the general effect by fatiguing the eye. One longed to isolate them from their too brilliant surroundings and examine them at leisure.

I had contrived to forget where I was and what had brought me there, in examining some treasures on an engraving-stand, when the man again made his appearance:

"Mr. Farrar will be glad to see you, if you will please to step this way, miss."

Mr. Farrar at last! I rose and followed the servant across the hall again, feeling anything but as calm and collected as I tried to appear. I was, in fact, oppressed with a sudden dread lest I should not find favor in Mr. Farrar's sight, and the consciousness that when I had given the change out of the note to him I did not possess sufficient money of my own to pay my fare back to my old lodgings again. I suppose the self-restraint which was necessary to conceal my anxiety made me appear to greater disadvantage than usual. Whatever the cause, I was very soon made to understand that first impressions were unfavorable to me.

"I did not expect you to arrive so early, Miss Haddon," were the first words, not very graciously uttered, which met my ears as the doors closed behind me.

"I thought it best to come at once, Mr. Farrar, in case you should require—"

"Oh yes; very right—very right and proper."

The *haut en bas* in the tone strengthened me in a moment, bracing my nerves as suavity and gentleness would not have done.

"I presume you heard from Mr. Wentworth respecting—"

"Yes, oh yes; I received a letter this morning apprising me of his success in finding a lady to act as chaperon to Miss Farrar. Pray be seated, Miss—oh yes—Haddon, Miss Haddon. Unfortunately, I am just at present an invalid. It is that, in fact, which necessitates the engaging a lady to act as chaperon to Miss Farrar."

Miss Farrar again; not his child, not his motherless girl, but Miss Farrar! I bowed, leaving him to proceed.

"Not that she is the only lady here; my—sister resides with me, Miss Haddon. But she—in point of fact, she belongs to the old school, and therefore is not altogether fitted—that is, she is independent of anything of the kind, and does not care to undertake the duties required. I came to the conclusion that a somewhat younger lady would be more fitted for the office, and consequently begged my friend, Mr. Wentworth, to undertake the selection of a lady for me." He paused a moment, then went on, half interrogatively, I thought. "He understood that it was a desideratum that the lady should be one accustomed to the best society, and in other respects a suitable companion for a young lady who will, at a future period, be the wife of a man of family holding a distinguished position in the world."

This was serious. A lady accustomed to the best society, and capable of inducing a young girl into the mysteries (they were mysteries to me) of fashionable life. The only society I had been accustomed to was that to be found in my dear mother's sick-room, and such faded gentility as people who live about in second-class lodgings are likely to meet with. Undoubtedly my dear mother was a gentlewoman, and Philip a gentleman, according to my creed; but what society might think about it I did not know.

I anxiously debated the matter in my own mind for a few moments. Was I justified in accepting the position? What if I gave Mr. Farrar an exact account of my past life, and left him to decide? I could have done so without a moment's hesitation to Mr. Wentworth; but I very quickly came to the conclusion that it would not do here. The cold, calculating eyes, narrow brow, and heavy, loose lips seemed to indicate a very different character from that of his friend; and it was therefore probable that he had a very different standard as to what constitutes a gentlewoman. Then there arose the difficulty—could I satisfy my own conscience in the matter?—which presently brought me back again to the question, What constitutes a gentlewoman? and I resolved to make the attempt.

He had been drumming his fingers on the arms of his chair, waiting, I suppose, rather impatiently for some sort of rejoinder to his peroration; but I was obliged to think the matter carefully over in my own mind, and he had to wait a few moments. He was probably not in the habit of being kept waiting for a reply, as he went on, in a somewhat irritated tone,

"Mr. Wentworth informs me that you are well-connected, Miss Haddon?"

The best speech he could have made in the

way of leading up to what I felt obliged to say, and yet rather shrunk from saying,

"My father was a Haddon of Haddon, and held a commission in the Guards, Mr. Farrar," I replied, hardly able to repress a smile at the thought of making them useful to me at last and in this way. If they were of any service to me now, it would be for the first time.

"Oh, indeed; very good; the Haddons of Haddon. Yes; that is satisfactory, certainly—Haddons of Haddon; *quite* satisfactory."

I could only smile, making a great mental courtesy to the Haddons of Haddon. To think of my former want of reverence for so great a power!

With a wave of the hand, he graciously went on,

"I was sure I might trust to Mr. Wentworth's discrimination. I hope you will soon feel at home here, Miss Haddon" (I could not help noticing that the name was uttered in quite a different tone now); "I keep a good house-keeper, and I trust you will find all the servants in my establishment treat you with proper respect."

"One generally gets one's deserts in that way. I suppose, Mr. Farrar," I replied, smiling. "I will try to deserve their respect."

He looked a little dubious.

"A strong hand—a firm hand." Then, I fancy, reverting to the Haddons of Haddon again, he added, pleasantly, "But of course they will be kept in their place by you. And now, perhaps, you would like to see my daughter."

"Allow me first to give you the change from the five pounds, and to thank you, Mr. Farrar."

"Oh yes; Wentworth mentioned something about it. He knows I like everything of that kind done in a large spirit. No consequence—no consequence at all, Miss Haddon," as I put the change on to the table at his elbow, and mentioned something about third class, the cost of which was all I had deducted.

"I am sorry you came third class, Miss Haddon. But in future it must be always first, as befits a lady of gentle breeding."

"You are very kind."

"Not at all—not at all." He rung the bell within reach of his chair, and inquired of the man who obeyed the summons, "Is Miss Farrar in, Drew?"

"No, sir."

"Show this lady to the morning-room," adding, after a moment's hesitation, "Mrs.—Tipper is there, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

He half rose from his chair, keeping his hands on the arms, and bowed to the Haddons of Haddon. Their representative bent low in return, then once more followed the man-servant.

What a palace the place seemed in size! I was ushered into a fourth great room, although I was much relieved to find that this last had an entirely different aspect from the others I had seen. A cheerful, home-like room, with windows to the ground, looking on to terraces and flower-gardens, and different in every best way from the show-rooms to which I had previously been introduced. I breathed a sigh of relief; quite refreshed by the sight of books, work, an easel, etc., the usual pretty feminine litter of a morning-room. Some one, at any rate, played at having ideas here.

But a slight cough drew my attention to a corner of the room near one of the open windows; and I saw a lady rising from an easy-chair—a short, stout little lady, of about sixty years of age, who could never have resembled her brother at any time, and was a great deal pleasanter to look at now. To me she was quite pretty in a homely, motherly way, with bright blue eyes, a mouth used to smile, and a dear little button of a nose, which combined charmingly with all the rest. The simple honesty and thorough good-nature so evident in every line of her face appealed directly to my heart, and I felt that if she and I did not become friends the blame would rest with me. The sight of her was my first welcome to Fairview.

"You are the lady—" she began, a little hesitatingly.

"My name is Mary Haddon, and Mr. Farrar has just engaged me to act as companion to his daughter, madam."

"Oh, indeed—oh yes, I am charmed, I am sure. Charmed to make your acquaintance, Miss Haddon. Lovely weather we are having, are we not?" with a tone and manner in such singular contrast with her appearance that I was for the moment dumb with astonishment. She half extended her hand, then drew it back again, and gave me a stiff little bow instead. "May I offer you any refreshments after your journey, Miss Haddon?"

I declined rather stiffly, not a little chilled and disappointed. One really had a right to expect something different from this homely, good-natured-looking little woman. She appeared rather at a loss what to do next, and presently hoped I was not fatigued with the journey.

No; I was not fatigued with the journey. Then, after a moment or two's reflection, I went on,

"The truth is, I am not a fine lady, Mrs. Tipper. I have been accustomed to all sorts of endurance, poverty among the rest, and it takes a hard day's work to fatigue me."

It was an inspiration. In a moment her whole bearing changed to one which appeared to come a great deal more naturally to her.

"I am heartily glad to hear it, my dear. I mean, about your not being a fine lady, you know. It does make such a difference, does it not? Do come and sit in this chair and make yourself comfortable, if you are *quite* sure you won't have a little snack before lunch. Or perhaps you would like to be shown to your room at once? Make yourself at home—now do."

I smilingly seated myself on the chair by her side, explaining that I preferred sitting a short time with her, if she would allow me. Half an hour with this kind old lady—I knew now that my first impression had been a correct one, and that she was as kind and good as she looked—would help me to become better acquainted with Fairview. After once more suggesting refreshments, in a kindly, fussy, homely fashion, she drew her chair closer to mine, and proceeded to take me into her confidence.

"To tell the truth, I have been quite uncomfortable at the thought of your coming—no, not *your* coming, my dear, but the sort of lady I was afraid you were going to be. The relief it is to see you as you are, instead of being some grand lady too fine to speak to me, as some of the great

people who come here are, is more than I can tell." Here she became amiably afraid lest I should think she meant to imply that I was not a lady, and anxiously began to apologize and explain; but I soon succeeded in setting her mind at ease upon that score, and she was chatting confidentially on again. "You see, my dear, I am not a lady."

I smiled.

"Like myself, you are not a *fine* lady, perhaps, Mrs. Tipper."

"It's very kind of you to say it; but I know the difference between us, my dear," she replied, her eyes beaming with kindness. "Jacob would be very vexed with me if he knew I said it to you; but if I did not, you would soon find it out for yourself; and I am sure you would not like me any more for pretending to be different in the beginning, would you?"

"I should be very sorry to see you different, Mrs. Tipper," I replied, in all sincerity.

"I don't know, my dear. It's been very trying for Jacob. But I tell him it's no use beginning now. I am too old to learn new ways, you know: not that I haven't tried; no one could have tried harder than I did, when Brother Jacob brought me to live with him; it was only my duty so to do. Between ourselves, I took lessons of a lady who advertises to teach ease and elegance to those unaccustomed to society. Worked hard, that I did, making courtesies and all the rest of it; but it wasn't much use. I can manage pretty well when there's a large party, and I've only got to smile and bow, and say, 'I'm charmed to see you,' and all that, but, as I told Jacob, it would never do with a lady living with us. You must not think that Jacob is not kind, for he is very kind. He was not so ashamed of his old sister as to let me live somewhere out of the way by myself, as I wanted him to do, when first I was left a widow. He wouldn't hear of it, my dear; and though I know he feels the difference between me and his great friends, and of course it's trying to have a sister named Tipper, he always treats me in the kindest way. You must excuse my saying all this to you, my dear; but really you look so kind, and I thought it was just as well for you to know the worst about me in the beginning."

"You have begun in the kindest way possible for me, in giving me the hope that I have found a friend, Mrs. Tipper," I replied, lifting the hand she had laid upon mine to my lips.

"You said you have seen my brother, and that it is all settled about your staying with us?" she inquired, looking a little doubtful; not, I fancy, quite understanding how it was that I could satisfy tastes so very opposite as were her brother's and her own.

"Yes; Mr. Farrar was quite satisfied," I returned, half smiling, as I thought of the very different means by which he had been satisfied. Not for the world would I have introduced the Haddons of Haddon here!

"And I am sure I am a great deal more than satisfied, and so will Lillian be; though you must not think she is like me; no, indeed—my darling is quite a lady, like her mother before her. My brother's wife was a beautiful young creature, and as good as she was beautiful. It was said that she had married him for his money; but no one who knew her would believe that. It was

a love-match on both sides, and poor Jacob was never the same after her death. Lillian was almost a baby when her mother died, and Jacob kept the promise which he made to his wife on her death-bed. Lillian was sent to a lady who was a connection of her mother's, where she was brought up, and did not come home to stay until six months ago, when her education was finished. You will find her everything a lady ought to be."

I was a little dubious upon that point. The idea of Mr. Farrar's daughter "finished" was rather depressing; and I became somewhat *distraite* as Mrs. Tipper went gently ambling on about Lillian's beauty, Lillian's accomplishments, elegant manners, and so forth. But it presently occurred to me that a "finished" young lady might possibly be inclined to be critical about the appearance of her chaperon, and I asked the kind little lady to allow me to go to my room. She rung the bell, and the man-servant summoned a house-maid, by whom I was conducted to a bedroom so large and luxuriously furnished that, in my ignorance, I imagined she must have made a mistake and brought me to one of the state chambers, until I noticed my boxes with the covers and straps off. She pleasantly offered her assistance in unpacking, adding the information that she was appointed to attend to my bedroom bell for dressing or what not. This was grand indeed! I could not help noticing the contrast between this well-trained and well-dressed servant and poor Becky, and made a mental vow to procure equal advantage for the latter as soon as I had it in my power so to do.

I told Lucy that I was accustomed to wait upon myself, and should therefore trouble her very little, dispensing with her assistance for the present.

CHAPTER V.

"I AM LILIAN."

I stood for a few moments at the window in contemplation of the beautiful view of the surrounding country, so wide and varied and well wooded; then, afraid of the sentiment which was creeping upon me again, I turned away, and set resolutely to work at unpacking. After putting my small belongings into something like order, I proceeded to make the best of myself for presentation to "Miss Farrar." It was the first time I had seen myself from head to foot, as I now did in the large cheval-glass, and I gazed not a little curiously, as well as anxiously and critically, at the *tout ensemble*. What should I look like to a lover who I knew was an admirer of women's beauty in the way a good man can admire it? What did I look to myself?

For the first few moments I experienced a thrill of altogether agreeable surprise. I really had no idea my figure was so good. "Tall, *élancée*, head well shaped and well poised," I thought, pleasantly checking off my perfections up to that point. With my face I was far from being as well satisfied. I tried to persuade myself that it was because I was more accustomed to it, and that such familiarity breeds contempt; but is one ever familiar with one's face? I can only say I was looking very discontentedly at

mine, forgetting that the very discontent was reflecting itself.

Too much squareness about the brow, too decided a mouth and chin, and eyes—well, if they ever looked soft, as well as large and dark, I had not seen it. Then the complexion—it might do for some people, but Philip's wife ought to have more coloring and softness, more general loveliness than this. Philip's wife! She ought to be a child of light, "beautiful with all the soul's expansion," the expression of her face ever varying with the dainty coloring of her graceful, poetic thoughts.

I was still picturing to myself the kind of woman Philip's wife ought to be, frowning the while at a dark, discontented face frowning discontentedly back at me, when the door was softly opened, and turning hastily round, my eyes fell upon a young girl standing upon the threshold.

"I beg your pardon; I do not think you heard me knock, and I could not wait. I am Lilian."

How shall I describe Lilian Farrar? *I have* described her. A child of light, "beautiful with all the soul's expansion," the expression of her face ever varying with the dainty coloring of her graceful, poetic thoughts. I need only add that she had deep-blue eyes, shaded by long lashes, straight, delicately chiselled little nose, sweet, sensitive mouth, pale-brown hair, and the figure of a graceful child just merging into womanhood.

"May I come in, please?"

Might love and loveliness and youth, all that is true and sweet and good, come in? But I only bowed, and held out my hand with a smile.

"I am so sorry I did not know when to expect you, Miss Haddon."

"I came earlier than I ought to have done."

"Oh no, pray do not think that; only I should like to have been at the station to make friends at the beginning."

"Let us call this the beginning."

She drew near to me, and in a caressing, child-like way lifted up her mouth to be kissed, as she said,

"Welcome to Fairview."

I am not considered to be demonstrative, but I know I kissed her as heartily as she kissed me, quite understanding that this was not like an ordinary first meeting. Then she gently impelled me toward a low chair, and knelt down beside me.

"If you could only know how very anxious I have been, and how relieved I am."

"Relieved?" I asked, bending down to get a better view of the sweet face.

"Yes; indeed I am."

"Then you can in a measure understand my sensations," I replied, smiling down into her eyes.

"Oh yes; but you could go if you did not like us, you know."

"And you could dismiss me if you did not like me."

"I did not think of that; I was only afraid—companion means so much, does it not?—how hard it would be for me if I cared for you, and you only cared to be here because—"

"Of the salary I received?"

"Oh, pray do not think that I meant that! May I say exactly what I was thinking of, Miss Haddon?"

"Pray do."

"Then I meant that it would be bad for me if you looked down upon the Farrars, if you were ever so nice, or even if you looked down upon the Tippers. I have just seen papa, and he says you belong to great people. That rather frightened me, until I saw dear old auntie, and found that she only knew you were nice, when I began to hope."

"I shall soon set your mind at ease about all that," I cheerfully replied. "Meantime, believe this much—I have begun to look up to Mrs. Tipper."

"What a nice kind thing to say, Miss Haddon!"

"What a pleasant thing to feel, Miss Farrar!"

She made a little *moue* at the "Miss Farrar," and I went on,

"You are very young, are you not?—younger than I expected to find you."

I was going to add, for an engaged young lady, but thought it better to let the allusion to her engagement come first from her.

"Only just turned seventeen," she replied, with a little sigh.

"Is that so very depressing?"

"Dear Miss Haddon, if I may tell you about myself, we shall feel more at home with each other."

"Tell me anything you please, my dear; and try to believe this much—you may trust me."

"I believed that the very first moment I looked at you. Yours is a face to trust."

"Is it—is it?" I murmured, smoothing the hair back from her white brow. "That is indeed something to be thankful for. And now I can ask with a clear conscience, why it is a trouble to be only seventeen?"

"Because, dear Miss Haddon, I am engaged; and Arthur—that is his name, you know—does not like waiting until I am older to be married. Papa says he must wait at least a year, and Arthur does not like it. Of course I should prefer waiting. I am sure we could not possibly be happier than we are now, and I should not like leaving papa—I will not, until he is quite well again; but I do not like Arthur to be disappointed either."

"Mr. Farrar told me of the engagement."

"But I do not think that papa told you of one thing, which is the very best of all. Arthur first met me at a garden-party, given by one of our grand neighbors, just after I came home for good; and he had not the least idea that papa was rich when he began to care for me. He liked me for myself—only for myself!" with a grave little nod at me. "He was quite surprised when he found that I was an heiress. Do you know, he often says that he should prefer having to work for me; only, of course, that need not be."

I read her thought, and my heart went out to Lilian Farrar, as I smilingly replied,

"He gives one that impression."

"Do you know him?" she inquired, looking a great deal surprised.

"Enough for that, I think. Mr. Wentworth, is he not?"

"Mr. Wentworth!" she ejaculated. "What made you think that? No: Arthur is an intimate friend of Mr. Wentworth's."

I saw that I had made a mistake. But I was

so much impressed in Mr. Wentworth's favor that the fact of her lover being his intimate friend seemed a sufficient guarantee of the latter's claims to respect.

"They were at Eton and Oxford together, and Arthur likes him very much," she continued, and as though she, on her side, considered that was saying a great deal in Mr. Wentworth's favor.

"A barrister, is he not?"

"Yes; but he has not been very successful as yet, though he works very hard—writes for newspapers and magazines; and I am sure it is very good of him, for Arthur says he was brought up in the greatest luxury by a rich uncle, and always led to believe that he would be the old man's heir; but just as he was leaving Oxford, his uncle married a young girl, and when he had children of his own he quite discarded his nephew. But he is like Arthur, and does not care about the money; he is a great deal more troubled about having lost the old man's good-will. Arthur says that he lives in an old tumble-down house—which is all he possesses of his own—with one servant, in the poorest way, and very rarely visits anywhere but here. Even here he does not come half often enough to please us, we all like him so much. Singular that both Arthur and he should commence life with large expectations, and both find themselves penniless, is it not? Mr. Trafford, Arthur's father, was unfortunate in some speculations, I believe; and the estate had to be sold after his death."

I said something to the effect that it was fortunate that they were equal to the position. Later, I found that her lover's father had squandered his property in the worst kind of extravagance.

A gong was being sounded, and she rose, putting her hand under my arm.

"You must be wanting luncheon, Miss Haddon. Auntie said that she could not prevail upon you to take any refreshment."

I was beginning to feel hungry, and acknowledged that I was. As she went down, she explained that her father had of late taken to invalid habits, and did not join them at table. We found Mrs. Tipper only in the dining-room; a large, lofty room, furnished with the same heavy grandeur of style which had struck me in the other parts of the house.

But a change had come over Mrs. Tipper since I had left her. Her genial good-nature was veiled by the same stiffness and constraint which had jarred upon me at first, as she politely trusted I should find something I could eat, regretted not having known that I should arrive early, so that she might have given orders accordingly, and so forth.

"The Haddons of Haddon!" I thought. She had seen her brother, and been awed by them. But I really could not allow them to come between this dear old lady and me, and therefore replied I had been accustomed to live so plainly that this was quite a banquet to me, as indeed it was. I saw that I lost ground a little with the man-servant in attendance by my candor; but I could afford to wait for his better appreciation. Mrs. Tipper hesitated a moment when she reached the head of the table, and signified by a gesture her wish for me to take my seat there; in fact, I know now, as I guessed then, that she was only too glad to slip out of taking any prominent position in the household. But I

very decidedly shook my head, and passed down, replying to her little protest that it was not to be thought of—it would not be right. I saw that she understood me to mean that it would not be etiquette, and sat down contented. Could the dear little lady have known it, my ignorance of the ways of the fashionable world was greater than her own. To my amusement, Mrs. Tipper's superiors in such knowledge have succumbed to the magic words, "It would not be right," with which, knowing no other code, I have occasionally ventured to settle a question. To certain people, "It is not right" solely means "It is not etiquette," than to sin against which there is no greater wrong, and they have occasionally yielded to me because they have supposed me better acquainted with the newest mode, rather than imagine that I could have the audacity to attempt innovations of my own.

I soon succeeded in making matters pleasant with Mrs. Tipper again. In five minutes the Haddons of Haddon were forgotten, and we were getting through luncheon in friendly, agreeable fashion. There was a slight obtuseness on Richard's side when I required anything; but he found that his forgetfulness did not in the slightest degree disturb me, nor prevent my obtaining what I wanted. I quietly waited; and as he could not let me repeat a request more than once without drawing the attention of the others to his negligence, he came at length to understand that it was just as well to do a thing at once as to be quietly forced to do it. The attention of both Lilian and her aunt was too much concentrated upon me for them to notice the man's remissness, and I did my best to prevent them seeing it. I knew that Lilian's eyes were turned upon me more than once when I was supposed to be unobservant, and thought of her words, "Companion means so much," with all the more respect for her judgment, whatever it might prove to be.

That we two should be friends, I knew. I should love her, and I believed that she might come to love me. But would ours be as the companionship of two of the same age? Should I ever be able to lay bare my inmost self, living so intensely and so differently from the Mary Haddon most people knew, to this young girl? She had spoken of her love to me; should I be able to speak of mine to her—the love which was deeper and stronger than a girl's love? It was with something akin to pain that I told myself, no. Because it was not the love of a girl; because it was in its heights higher and in its depths deeper; because it was in its strength and weakness so much more human at eight-and-twenty than at seventeen, I could not talk about it to Lilian Farrar. The shadowy, poetic sentiment which clings about a young girl's dream, the love which is more in love with love than with the lover, was not mine. I am an old woman now, writing a story for men and women, and therefore I will add that I have still quite as much romance and enthusiasm in my composition as I had at seventeen, which is an admission to make in these days; but at eight-and-twenty I persuaded myself that they were, or ought to be, dead. In truth, my eight-and-twenty years were pressing upon me rather too heavily for mental health. I could not take kindly to the idea that youth was gone, nor recognize that the

best of me was not necessarily gone with it. But there is no need for me to analyze and dwell upon my weaknesses here; they will be apparent enough as I go on, and will doubtless preach their own moral without my assistance.

After luncheon, we returned to the pretty morning-room where I had first seen Mrs. Tipper, and devoted the afternoon to making better acquaintance with each other. I began by telling my own little story (so far as it could be told with Philip left out) about my dear mother's long illness, the struggles I had had to obtain a living when alone, and so forth, because I wished to appear in my true colors to these two, and, above all, wished to get rid of the Haddons-of-Haddon tone in our future intercourse. Then dear old Mrs. Tipper came out grandly with her little story respecting past ups and downs, not even omitting the fact that her deceased husband had been messenger ("between ourselves, odd man, my dear") in the firm where her brother rose to be chief, and how he had been pensioned by "dear Jacob," and ended his days in peace and comfort in a cottage of his own at Holloway, all the grandest visions of his youth realized.

Afterward Lilian told how her father had risen in life entirely by his own efforts; while her color deepened with an equally right pride as she added that her mother had been a gentlewoman, to whose foresight her child owed the education that was something better than any her father's money alone could have purchased. As Mrs. Tipper had informed me, it had been Mrs. Farrar's dying wish that the first fifteen years of her child's life should be spent with an old friend and distant connection of her own. She had not erred in her judgment.

Notwithstanding her naturally good disposition, Lilian would have suffered from the disadvantages consequent upon being brought up in luxury, the petted heiress of a wealthy man, instead of spending her early years at a country vicarage in wholesome study and exercise. I could understand now how it happened that Mr. Farrar's daughter was so refined and different from what might have been expected. I knew now why it gratified her so much to believe that her lover had not sought her for her money's sake. Any one but herself would have thought it natural enough that she should be sought for her own sake. How true, and good, and sweet she was, and how soon one knew it, there being no mysterious complications in her nature which it would take time to discover!

"To think of our having so dreaded the lady-companion, auntie; and to think of my having pleaded so much with papa against engaging one!" ejaculated Lilian, when, after a very pleasant afternoon, we rose to go to our rooms and dress for dinner.

"We did dread her, did we not, dear?" smilingly returned the old lady, putting her hand upon mine; "though I had the most cause for dread."

"Indeed you had not—your cause is mine," very decidedly said Lilian.

That they could say so much before me was sufficient, had I not already arrived at the agreeable conclusion that I had found a home until Philip's return.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

I DID the best I could in the way of adorning for dinner with some of my dear mother's old lace, and a cherry-colored bow or two on my black silk dress, and flattered myself that I was presentable enough for a family party; but, on entering the drawing-room, I was somewhat dismayed to find Lilian in full evening dress. To my unaccustomed eyes her elaborate toilet appeared more suited to a ballroom than for dinner, and my taste in this case served as well as knowledge, for I know now that it was too much for home-dress according to the decrees of society. I think she saw what was passing in my mind, for she apologized in her half-shy, graceful way by asking me to excuse it. It was "a fancy of papa's to see her so; and she liked to gratify his slightest fancies now."

Mrs. Tipper had also made more change than seemed necessary for home toilet, and did not look at home in her rich moire and too massive jewellery, put on hap-hazard, as it were; brooches stuck in upside down and on one side, as though it were enough for them to be there; rings, bracelets, etc., glittering with diamonds and other precious stones, not combined in the best taste.

But I soon had something to think of besides our toilets. Lilian whispered to me that "he" had arrived; and when presently Mr. Trafford entered the room and was introduced to me, my attention was concentrated upon him.

Interested as I already was in Lilian Farrar, I was more than curious to see her lover. Moreover, I was altogether inclined in his favor. No one could be more prepossessed in another's favor than I was in Arthur Trafford's; and yet I had been in his society barely half an hour before I was conscious of being a little disappointed. Whether my expectations had been too exalted, or there was some grave cause for the disappointment, time would show. I certainly had expected to find Lilian's lover and Mr. Wentworth's friend very different from the fashionable-looking young man before me.

His bearing was that of a gentleman, and he was handsome—some might say very handsome. I would not allow even that much, in my disappointment, telling myself that his head wanted more breadth, that his features were too delicately chiselled for manly beauty, and that his hands were too small, and soft, and white. The very grace of his figure offended me, as indicating lack of power. What does the world want with graceful men, with hands incapable of grasping anything?

I had been prepared to like him for Lilian Farrar's sake, and already I was unpleasantly conscious that I might learn to dislike him for her sake. I tried to persuade myself that I was too hasty in my judgment—that his might be the type of manly beauty—the refined delicacy which in certain instances has accompanied a fine order of intellect. But no; Shelley had a different brow from that, and something very different looked out of Shelley's eyes.

While I was summing him up in this unpromising way, I am bound to acknowledge that he was most courteously trying to make talk with me. Lilian had introduced us in her pretty, graceful way, informing us that we were to be-

come great friends; and he had taken the hint, making himself specially attentive and agreeable to me during dinner. He talked well, and appeared well read; and I must do him the justice also to say that his bearing toward Mrs. Tipper was all that it should be, with no perceptible undercurrent of pride or satire. Above all, I must acknowledge that his love for Lilian was sincere; no woman could for a moment have doubted that; whatever its value in other respects, it was sincere. And yet I was perverse enough not to be satisfied with him. Why could I not take to him? I irritably asked myself, conscious that I had not sufficient grounds for my prejudice, and ashamed of feeling it. But there it was, and I could not overcome it.

Mr. Farrar joined us in the drawing-room, which was lighted up as if for a large assembly, for an hour after dinner; and I, who had been accustomed to note certain signs and symptoms in an invalid, could see that the effort cost him a great deal. He was, however, not too weak to tell me the cost of building and furnishing Fairview; that he had paid two hundred and fifty pounds for the grand piano; a guinea a yard for the curtains; that the carpet had been made to his special order, etc.; while Mrs. Tipper was smiling amiably in her after-dinner nap, her fat little jewelled hands folded at her capacious waist; and Lilian and her lover were sauntering among the flowers in the moonlight outside.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, Mr. Farrar told me there were to be all sorts of entertainments given at Fairview—dinner-parties, garden-fêtes, and so forth. Then he named two or three City magnates as his friends, and went more fully into the Trafford pedigree for my edification, dwelling enjoyably upon the idea of being father-in-law to a Trafford. "The Warwick Traffords, you understand, Miss Haddon. It is very essential that should be remembered." Going on to point out the great things which might be expected from such an alliance: "With money as well as birth, Arthur Trafford would be able to enter Parliament, and make some mark in the world." All of which proved that he, too, had faith in the young man's capabilities.

I know now that it was Arthur Trafford's evidently sincere admiration for things great which misled so many who knew him. Were he capable of doing the deeds he could admire, he would have been what he had the credit for being. When I heard him dilate with glowing eyes and heightened color upon some heroic deed, I could understand how he had obtained an influence over a young, imaginative girl. He not only made her believe him to be endowed with the qualities of a hero, but honestly believed it himself, persuaded that he only lacked opportunity to prove that he was made of very different material from that of ordinary men.

I listened to Mr. Farrar politely, as I was bound to do, and not a little pitifully too. All this was what he had set his heart upon; and he would not live to have his ambition gratified, even had Arthur Trafford been all that he was imagined to be. Had no one warned him? Did not the sight of his own pinched and drawn face warn him that he was already on the threshold of the other life?

Had I been speculatively inclined just then, I might perhaps have carried on the thought which

suggested itself to me. I will only say that I felt more respect for the etherealized body at that moment than for the earth-bound soul. I think now that Mr. Farrar would not be warned of what was approaching, and contrived to deceive his child and those about him, as he deceived himself, respecting his real state.

There certainly was at present no foreshadowing of the coming separation in his daughter's face. She was altogether free from care; and I was presently very glad to find that my first estimate of her had been so far correct. She was not the kind of girl to be selfish in her happiness; even in small things she showed herself to be considerate for others.

Mr. Farrar was presently wheeled away in his invalid chair, bidding me good-night with the information that he was just at the period of convalescence when rest and seclusion are essential; and as soon as she found that I was left companionless in the drawing-room, she came in, her lover's protests, which were carried on to the very threshold, notwithstanding.

But I begged to be allowed to make acquaintance with the garden, and went out into the moonlight, leaving the lovers at the piano together. It was the very best light in which to see the Fairview grounds, where there were no trees higher than shrubs, and too much statuary, with vivid patches of color, so fatiguing to the eye; masses of flowers without scent or leaves arranged with mathematical precision, as though they had become strong-minded, and would only speak to you in problems. In fine, it was the newest fashion in gardening, which Mr. Farrar prided himself upon keeping up at great expense. To my unaccustomed eye, it lacked the poetry of the old, less formal styles. But it looked its best in the softening and subduing effect of moonlight; one then got some hint of shadow, which was as lacking during most of the day as in the famous Elizabethan picture. And in the light of day the sylvan gods and goddesses looked specially uncomfortable for, want of a little foliage. One "startled nymph," placed at the corner of a gravel walk, without so much as a shrub near her, appealed to one's sense of justice in the most pathetic way.

My best enjoyment, as time went on, was to go down (the grounds sloped down a side of the hill upon which the house was built) through the kitchen-gardens, seat myself upon the low wall which bounded them, and, turning my back upon the glories of Fairview, refresh my eyes by gazing upon the beautiful undulating country, stretching far into distance beyond. I never tired of gazing at the varied scene—pasture-lands, deep woods, ripening hop and wheat fields, pretty homesteads, an occasional glimpse of the winding river, and a primitive-looking little ivy-covered church. It was this little church that Lilian and I elected to attend, instead of going in state to the newly built edifice near Fairview, to which Mr. Farrar had given large donations. There was one nest of a house, peeping out from its woody retreat, on the slope of a hill, rising from a small straggling village in a lonely valley, half a mile or so to the left of Fairview, which made a special appeal to my fancy—a long, low, old-fashioned house, with veranda and green terrace walk. I pictured to myself the lovely view as seen from that aspect, and what life might be

with Philip in such a home—the rest and peace we two wanderers might find in such a haven as that. Had not I been a wanderer too? He was writing more and more hopefully of being able to return and settle in England in another year.

“Thank God there will be no more need for money-grubbing, Mary. We can live with a few chosen friends and our books, in some cottage home, free from care.”

It was part of our arrangement to live simply as well as largely, our only ambition being to gather congenial friends about us. Ah me! ah, Philip! what a glorious dream it was!

Lilian was very impatient to hear my praises of her lover—or to talk them; it did not much matter which—and that first evening she instituted a custom to come to my room the last thing every night. “If you do not mind, Miss Haddon?” in her sweet, pleading way. Mind, indeed! It would be the very best way of finishing the day which she could invent, I told her, taking her face between my hands, and putting my lips to her brow.

“But I fear you are engaged; you must not let me be selfish,” she murmured, glancing at my open desk.

I had commenced a letter to Philip, telling him of my change of abode, and doing my best to convey to him the impression that my engagement at Fairview was a less business one than it really was. I closed my blotting-book at once. Philip would get his letter quite as soon if I wrote later; and it was my fancy to write to him during the silent hours of the night.

She took a seat upon a stool at my feet, for that also was to be an institution, she laughingly observed. She commenced with a few words expressive of the hope that I should like Fairview; and then, in charming Lilian fashion, told me that “dear Arthur (you must let me call him that to you when we are alone, dear Miss Haddon) is delighted at my good-fortune in having you. He sees, as we all do, how very different it might have been.”

She seemed to think that nothing could be more gratifying than to find favor in “Arthur’s” sight. The possibility of his not finding favor in my sight did not, I think, for one moment enter her thoughts. Fortunately, she took my admiration of him for granted. I should have found it difficult to satisfy her expectations upon the point. How pleasant it was to listen to her ideal talk of her lover—her vivid imagination investing him with all the grandest attributes of a hero, though it would have been even more pleasant had I had no misgivings upon the point, or felt sure that she would never be disillusioned! As it was, the fear that she might some day be roughly awakened from her bright dream, and the knowledge of what such an awakening would cost her, caused me to listen rather gravely and abstractedly.

I was a little disturbed from another cause, not sufficiently appreciative of the wisdom which comes with years. Ah me! how far apart that twelve years’ difference between our ages seemed to set us! I was so sensitive on the point that it did not occur to me that the difference between our characters or temperaments might in some measure account for my reticence. I was not naturally so expansive in my manner as are many women. Though the thought of Philip

would set my pulses throbbing and my cheeks aflame, I could no more have talked of my love to Lilian Farrar than I could have cried it aloud in the streets. The rhapsodies over a certain portrait—the kisses pressed upon the paper that his hands would touch, and sundry other vagaries committed after she had left me that night; could she have seen it all, she would no longer have thought it necessary to apologize for talking so much love-talk to me. I was unreasonable enough to be wounded at her supposing it to be necessary to apologize, while I took no step to show her that no apology was needed. And, the kisses and rhapsodies notwithstanding, the tone of the letter written that night to Philip was tinged with a *souffron* of melancholy. It contained more than one reminder that he must not expect to find me exactly the same in appearance as the girl he had parted with eight years ago.

But I do not think mine is a morbid nature, apart from that one subject, and fortunately there were now too many demands upon me, and my time was too fully employed in the duties of my position, to leave leisure for unhealthy study of my feelings.

Mrs. Tipper at once left everything in the way of management to me, only too glad to resign the reins of government, which had been but loosely held, into my hands, and to cease to have any recognized individuality in the household.

“My dear, the servants all know that I haven’t been used to it, and I’m sure they are no way to blame for that: of course anybody could see, only they won’t mind what I say.”

Moreover, I received a hint from headquarters that it would be considered part of my duty to keep the domestic machinery under my supervision, the house-keeper with the high wages notwithstanding. The management of a set of servants who had been accustomed to do pretty much as they pleased, except with respect to their master—he was as exacting and ready to take affront as his sister was lax and good-natured—was, I soon found, no easy task. Lilian was simply the pet of the house, as she had been ever since her return home, seeing nothing the servants did not choose her to see, and with no thought of evil—no suspicions that others might be less trustworthy and unselfish than herself. Warm-hearted, sympathetic, and lavish with her large allowance of pocket-money, she was ready to give wherever she was told help was needed, and was made acquainted with all the requirements of the servants and their relations. Grandmothers, mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles—numberless needy people were made known to her, and all found sympathy and help from her. The servants at Fairview had good cause for their fealty to their young mistress.

I was too often obliged to look upon the reverse of the picture. Many a trait of human nature, of which it is painful to be cognizant, and still more painful to be the censor, came under my notice, and for a time my position was not a very enviable one, the servants resenting what I suppose appeared to them as undue interference. But, as time passed on, they learned to distinguish between my blame and their master’s. They found that I blamed neither from pleasure nor anger, but simply because it was part of my business, which it gave me no little pain to be obliged to do.

Then they could not say they found me either proud or ashamed of my position. Little half-speeches and innuendoes, with which I was first assailed, to the effect that "people who took wages had no right to set themselves up above other people who did the same," were met by the frank acknowledgment that they certainly had not a right. "Moreover, they soon saw that I assumed no airs of superiority, while trying my best to do the work I was paid to do." So at length we came to understand each other better; difficulties became fewer, and my work was less a task.

One step which I took, and which I quite believed would cause me to lose ground in the estimation of the servants, had quite a contrary effect from that I expected. I was very soon able, with dear old Mrs. Tipper's ready sanction, to give Becky a step in life. An under-housemaid was required, and I contrived to win Mrs. Sowler's consent for Becky to come to Fairview. As I laid no restrictions whatever upon Becky in the matter, I thought it quite possible that certain facts concerning my poverty and consequent rather hard life while at Mrs. Sowler's might become known among the servants at Fairview.

But I did not do Becky justice. As thoughtful and considerate for me as she was true, nothing relating to the past escaped her. Although she was at first awed and overwhelmed by the gorgeousness of her new home, and was, when alone with me, very frank in expressing her astonishment at the ease and readiness with which I accepted it all, I found that she said no word about my past troubles down-stairs. She only displayed her surprise at my philosophy and delight at her own good-fortune when we were safely shut in alone together.

"Ain't it lovely, when you have been used to things so different, miss? Here's me sitting down to dinner every day like a lady born! No call to snatch bits off the plates as they come down now! And instead of washing and doing my hair in the back scullery, there's a beautiful bedroom of my own to go to. Mrs. Sowler wouldn't believe! And I've got you to thank for it all! Just see if I won't try! They sha'n't say you have recommended a girl as can't work, though Sophy says it isn't genteel to tear at it as I do."

Becky's gratitude to me was even deeper and more enduring than I had expected to find it, and her love—I must have been almost perfect to deserve such love as Becky's, though I knew that it did her no harm to indulge it.

Lilian, who, from my description of past hardships, took great interest in her, and was extremely kind to her, did not, as I took it for granted she would, share with me in Becky's love. Nay, I verily believe that, in her allegiance to me, poor Becky was jealous of a rival power. I could not get her to be enthusiastic about even Lilian's beauty. Becky always insisted that it was the pretty dresses which made her look more attractive than I did, and tried to persuade me to endeavor to outvie her. Her stanch friendship did me not a little good. It was especially cheering to me just now to find that I could keep love as well as win it without using any unlawful means.

CHAPTER VII.

VANQUISHED.

WE were living very quietly. Mr. Farrar was getting no nearer to convalescence, and all gaiety was still in abeyance. The few callers who made their appearance at Fairview were mostly new acquaintances, made since Lilian had returned home and her father had commenced giving large entertainments; and their visits were very "few and far between." They were politely interested in Mr. Farrar's health; hoped his charming daughter would keep up her spirits; felt *quite* sure he was safe in Sir Clement's hands—Sir Clement was always successful, and so forth; then rustled smilingly away in their rich dresses, no doubt with the pleasant consciousness of having done all that could be expected. We on our side could well have spared them that amount of labor. Dear old Mrs. Tipper was always depressed and conscious of her shortcomings after such visits; and Lilian would nestle up closer to me, as though making a silent protest of her own against such friendship as they had to offer. In truth, the greater part of those who came were merely rich; and the two or three elderly ladies who were not unlike Mrs. Tipper were too completely under the control of fashionable daughters to forget their grandeur and compare notes with her about past times, as they would have been only too glad to do. Mr. Farrar had passed his old friends on the road to wealth, and had not yet quite succeeded in overtaking more distinguished ones. The little his daughter had seen of their great friends had not made her desire to see more.

"Arthur says, I shall enjoy being in society when once I get used to it; but— Do you think I shall, dear Miss Haddon?"

"There must be some advantage in mixing with people, dear; but you know I have been as little accustomed to what is called society as you have."

"I sometimes think it is that which makes it so nice to be with you. You are so different from the people who come here, and so like those I knew in the dear old vicarage life. You never say a thing merely because it is polite to say it."

"I hope I do not say things it is impolite to say, goosy," I smilingly replied. It was so pleasant to know that I found favor in her sight.

"I wish Arthur's sister were more like you, Mary" (hesitatingly and gravely). "She makes more loving speeches; she is always saying that she longs for the time to come when we can be more together; and yet we never seem to draw a bit nearer to each other; sometimes I almost fear we never shall."

No; they never would. I had seen quite enough of Mr. Trafford's sister to know that Lilian and she would always be far enough apart in spirit. Mrs. Chichester was a great favorite with, and in much request by, the world to which she belonged. "A young and attractive woman—a charming widow, who had been unfortunate in her marriage," said her friends. "A manœuvrer, who had married an old man for his money, and found too late that it was all settled upon his grown-up children by a former marriage," said others. She was called very sensitive, and good, and sweet. I only know that her sweetness and

goodness were of a very different texture from Lillian's.

As I watched them together, Mrs. Chichester, with her pretty rapid face, graceful languid air, and soft voice, uttering a string of ultra-affectation speeches, and Lillian shyly responding in her own fashion with a low murmured word, a warm flush on her cheeks, or a little half-gesture, I think I rated them both at their true value.

Mrs. Chichester was the only lady who came to Fairview on intimate terms; and she only came when she could make her escape, as she termed it, from a host of engagements. I had my suspicions that she did not find her "dearest Lillian" quite so congenial as she affirmed. There was a grave, uncompromising truth about Lillian which I believe Mrs. Chichester found rather difficult to get on with for any length of time. In time I noticed something else; Mrs. Chichester's visits were generally made on the days we expected Robert Wentworth.

For the first two or three times of our meeting she took great pains to cultivate me, declaring that she foresaw we were to become great friends. But after a while I appear to have ceased to interest her, although she was none the less sweet and pleasant to me on the occasions we had anything to say to each other. In truth, I believe that neither her brother nor she took very cordially to me, though both seemed to consider it necessary to keep up the appearance of doing so. Had they been more open about their sentiments, they would not have offended me. I had no right to expect more from them than I gave; and I really gave very little.

Arthur Trafford might perhaps have been taken more into my favor than was his sister but for his engagement to Lillian. As an everyday young man, with artistic tastes, there was nothing in him to positively object to. But such negative goodness was not, I told myself, sufficient for Lillian's husband. Her husband ought to be able to appreciate her in quite a different way from that of Arthur Trafford. I am not sure that he even knew the best part of her.

I think the principal reason for his not taking to me was jealousy. Lillian was a little too much absorbed in her new friend to please him. With his sister it was different; and I was very much amused by her tactics. It requires little intelligence to defeat schemers, who generally plan on the supposition that some complicated machinery will be used to circumvent them, and who are thrown out in their calculations when one does nothing. Mrs. Chichester began to adopt the tone of being rather afraid of Miss Haddon, and some of her little speeches about my unapproachableness and so forth reached the ears they were not intended for.

"If I did not see that you take to her so much, dearest, I should fancy her unsympathetic and cold—one of those natures one never can feel at home with. Oh yes," in reply to an earnest protest from Lillian; "good, of course; extremely, I have no doubt; but I am so enthusiastic in my friendships, and she quite chills me."

It so happened that there was another hearer of this little speech besides myself. Our dinner-party had been enlarged that evening by the presence of Mr. Wentworth as well as Mrs. Chichester, and we had all dispersed afterward, leaving Mr. Farrar and his sister in the drawing-room

for their after-dinner rest. I had contrived to slip away from the others, and went down to my favorite seat on the low wall a little more readily than usual, turning my back upon Fairview.

As Mrs. Chichester's speech sounded very close to me, I stood up. She would be able to see me across gooseberry and currant bushes, and so be warned not to say more than she would like to do in my presence. But they had passed on, and were already out of sight. I was sitting down again, when a voice by my side quietly asked,

"Of whom were they speaking?"

"Mr. Wentworth!" I ejaculated, in some surprise at his having found out my retreat. I thought no one penetrated beyond the kitchen gardens.

Robert Wentworth and I were becoming fast friends. The few times we had met at Fairview had been sufficient to show me that I had found a friend, and no ordinary one. Moreover, I had built up a little romance about him. Though I had so soon discovered the mistake I had made in supposing that he was engaged to Lillian, I believed that he loved her as only such men can love; and while I heartily wished he held Arthur Trafford's place in her heart, I felt all a woman's sympathy for one whose hopes were wrecked, and who yet could bear himself so manfully. This had in the outset inclined me to make friends with him more than any one else who visited Fairview. The more I knew of him, the more I found to respect.

As I have said, I was not without a suspicion that Mrs. Chichester regarded him with favorable eyes; and I will do her the justice to say that I believe she was in this instance false to her creed, and loved him for himself, though he was as yet said to be only a rising man.

"He had not worked and struggled in vain," thought one or two who had watched him with some interest; and there was now some chance of his succeeding at the bar.

"Of whom were they speaking?" he repeated. It was his habit always to get an answer.

"Of me. I think you must have guessed as much as that."

He laughed; sitting down by my side.

"Then why are you so philosophic about it? Do you think it is good to be cold and unsympathetic?"

"It may be good to be cold and unsympathetic—to some things."

"What things?"

But I was not going to be drawn into a discussion in that direction. He was always trying to lead me into abstract talk, and sometimes I enjoyed taking a little flight with him; but I reserved to myself the right of choosing the direction we should take.

"What things?"

I jestingly replied that I would leave him to determine what things.

"You appear to very decidedly turn your back upon some things."

"I enjoy that view."

He turned his eyes upon it for a moment. "It is pretty enough in its way."

"In its way, indeed!" Then I presently went on, "It is a way of quiet loveliness, which has a great charm for me in its suggestions of peace and rest. That house amidst the trees by the

hill-side has a special attraction for me. Even you must allow it is a charming retreat."

"That low house? It is well enough; but—" turning his eyes upon my face, he added, sharply, "What do you want with rest and peace and charming retreats? What right have you to be sighing for them?"

"Right? Surely every one has a right to them that can get them?"

"The right is only fairly won by working for it: and what have you done? I mean, of course, in comparison with what you have the power to do."

I suppose I looked my surprise. He went on, more gravely,

"Pardon me, but I gave you credit for being one of the last to desire 'inglorious ease.' I believed that even your life here, with its many demands, is not quite enough for the exercise of your full strength. Rest and peace are for the weak and vanquished."

"Then I suppose it is feeling weak and vanquished which makes me incline toward them."

"A little morbidness, more likely; the need of something to fight against. And yet," he added, musingly, "there ought to be enough to exercise your energies here."

"There is enough to satisfy the most belligerent," I replied, laughing outright. "I assure you there is ample opportunity for the exercise of any power I may possess in that direction."

"And you acknowledge yourself vanquished?"

"Not by anything here, Mr. Wentworth."

"I beg your pardon," gravely. Then, with the abruptness of friendship, he presently added, "Did Trafford give you the *Westminster*? The paper I marked ought to interest you."

"No; he forgot, I suppose."

"Oh, I see. I must be my own messenger next time, of—employ Becky. You showed some discrimination in giving her a step in life."

"Becky! Do you know her?"

"A little."

"Please do not be mysterious."

"I made her acquaintance when— You do not think I was so inhuman as to let you go that day without keeping you in sight, in order to make sure you came to no harm. And— Well, I did not feel quite sure about you, so kept about the place until I came upon Becky; and we two struck up a friendship."

"It was good of you."

"Was it? I am too much accustomed to analyze motives to be quite sure about that."

"And you have been in Becky's confidence all this time!" I murmured, a little confusedly, with the consciousness of what that might mean.

"More than she imagines, perhaps; since she is no match for me in diplomacy. I need not tell you she is leal."

"No."

"How different the ring of those two voices!" he presently added, as the others again approached in the path running parallel with the wall upon which we were sitting, and on the other side of the kitchen garden, separating and screening us from observation, and across which came the voices of Mrs. Chichester and Lillian.

"I am glad that is evident to others as well as to me," I rejoined. "I like to think they are dissimilar in the least as well as the greatest points. Lillian will never become a woman of fashion."

"Not while what she typifies is out of date."

I knew that he meant the enthusiasm and romance—the delicate purity of her mind, which was so harmoniously typified by her style of beauty. Then, following out my thought, I absently added,

"And you are his friend?"

"We were together at Eton and Oxford. Our families are distantly related; and he, being four or five years my junior, was placed by his father in some degree under my charge, though we were in different sets."

"I can imagine that."

"He was a favorite at the university; and—" as though searching about in his mind for some other good thing to say—"his love for her is sincere."

"Yes; thank God, it is that!"

"Mr. Wentworth and Miss Haddon! I had not the least idea of finding you here!" It was Mrs. Chichester speaking, with the prettiest air of surprise, as she emerged from the side-path, though the keen glance with which she measured the distance between him and me was not unobserved by one of us. "What a delightful retreat! May I join you?"—sitting down by my side with a graceful little addendum about feeling fatigued, and having found herself somewhat *de trop* with the lovers.

"And gentlemen are so very frank with sisters in such cases—are they not? Are you blessed with brothers, Miss Haddon?" And so on, a list of questions which brought out the facts that I was not only lacking in brothers, but many other blessings.

"Quite alone in the great world, and an orphan. How very sad!"

Some way, whenever Mrs. Chichester attempted to talk sentiment, it was apt to degenerate into bathos; more perhaps from the contrast between her face and manner and what she said than from the words themselves.

"And past the age for charity-schools, Mrs. Chichester," I smilingly replied.

"Oh, but indeed, indeed, you must not think I meant anything of that kind!" Then turning toward him in a pretty, distressed way, she entreated him to help her to persuade me that she had really meant no harm. "I assure you I had not the slightest intention to give offense; do, pray, believe it, Miss Haddon."

Mrs. Chichester was always so terribly afraid of offending Miss Haddon, and so extremely and obviously cautious lest any words of hers should remind me of my position.

"Unfortunately the facts remain, however kind you may be about it, Mrs. Chichester," I gravely replied: "I am an orphan, and alone in the great world."

"And so completely defenseless—so weak, and easily vanquished," gravely put in Robert Wentworth.

"Ah, now you are laughing at me!" she ejaculated, an angry light in her eyes. "I expected more courtesy from *you*, Mr. Wentworth."

"I assure you I was only repeating Miss Haddon's own sentiments, Mrs. Chichester."

This was too bad. I suppose he meant it as a punishment for my little exhibition of weakness. But I decided that the punishment was too great for the offense, so quietly took up the glove, and bided my time.

Mrs. Chichester diverged into other topics: dear Lilian, so sweet and good and trusting; so entirely unsuspicious of people, and so forth; to which we could easily assent. But I was not sufficiently enthusiastic upon the subject to please Mrs. Chichester, it seemed; and she took great pains to assure me that she did not in the least degree exaggerate dear Lilian's perfections. But though he gravely assured me that she did not, and even went as far as to hope that in time I should become as fully alive to Miss Farrar's good qualities, I was not to be piqued into giving warmer expression to my feelings. I only gave him a smile for a reply.

Then I did what I believe was more satisfactory than words to Mrs. Chichester: rose and walked away, altogether unheeding Robert Wentworth's almost pleading protest.

"The moon is just rising, Miss Haddon, and the view will be at its best presently."

But I chose to punish him for his bit of treachery, and walked off, reminding them that it still wanted half an hour to tea-time. When the half-hour had expired, they re-entered the drawing-room, where I was sitting in pleasant communion with Mrs. Tipper, both looking rather grave, not to say out of humor.

"Do you always avenge yourself in that crushing way, Miss Haddon?" he asked, coming to my side for a moment.

"I always defend myself in the best way I can when it comes to blows, Mr. Wentworth," I gravely replied.

"And this is the young lady who fears being weak and vanquished!"

"Not with such weapons as have been used to-night, Mr. Wentworth."

"Well, do not talk any more about wanting rest and peace after showing how much you enjoy planting a home-thrust as you have done."

"We were talking of a very different war and very different peace from this."

"I suppose we were; and in that case it is for me to cry *peccavi*."

"Yes."

"Well, I will think about it. One should never do that on impulse. Meantime, good-night."

I gave him my hand with a smile. He took leave of the others, and went out.

Mrs. Chichester seemed to have lost her self-control a little. She certainly found it difficult to be quite as sweet and gracious to me as usual that night. I believe, too, she had tried her influence upon Lilian with respect to me, for the latter was more than usually tender and loving when she came to my room that night for our little *tête-à-tête*. There was just the difference which might be expected in one of her nature after hearing anything against a friend.

"I love you, dear Mary; I love you. You must let me say it to-night."

"Why to-night of all nights in the year?" I smilingly rejoined.

"Because it does me real good to say it—because I must."

"And it does me real good to hear you say it. Dear Lilian, do not you see how precious your love is to me?"

I suppose that there was something in the tone which satisfied her. The shadow passed from her face, and she looked her bright, happy self as she began to talk "Arthur" again. She had

long since divined that such talk did not fatigue me.

"I really believe you must have a love-story of your own locked away somewhere, or you would never be able to listen so patiently to me as you do," she laughingly ejaculated, intuitively lighting upon the true reason for my sympathy, one evening when she had been more effusive on the subject than usual. "Ah, now I am sure of it!" she added, her quick eyes, I suppose, detecting a consciousness in mine. "And, oh, Mary, when shall I be thought worthy to hear it?"

"As though you were not that now! Dear Lilian, I should like you to know—of course you shall know—and yet I think I must ask you to allow me to defer the telling of it a little longer."

"Of course I will. But I really think I can guess—a little. If I am only right, how delightful it will be!"

Had I allowed her to go on—had I listened and explained, instead of shrinking nervously away from the subject, would it have altered the future? I was still shy and reserved about unlocking my treasure, even for Lilian's eyes. I have acknowledged my morbid weakness upon the point, and it did not decrease. But I very soon had something besides myself to think about.

CHAPTER VIII.

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

MR. FARRAR grew suddenly and rapidly worse; and the doctors, hastily summoned, saw that it was necessary to be frank and explicit with Mrs. Tipper and me as to his true state. His disease was approaching a fatal point, and his time was very short, they affirmed. Before we had time to prepare Lilian for the shock, the fiat went forth that the end might be expected in a few hours. Poor Mrs. Tipper shut herself up with her grief; and to me was deputed the painful task of making the truth known to his child. She was at first completely overwhelmed. That his state was a critical one she had not had the slightest suspicion. She had got accustomed to his invalid ways; and, hearing nothing to the contrary, had taken it for granted that he was surely, if slowly, progressing toward convalescence, persuading herself that at the very worst he would go on in the same way for years.

I think that Mrs. Tipper, and even he himself, was deceived in the same way.

I quietly tended Lilian through the first agony of her grief; but did not let it subside into despair, making an appeal (which I felt to be most effectual with one of her nature) to her unselfishness.

Her father needed her love more than he had ever yet needed it, and tears and grief must be kept back so long as it was in her power to comfort and sustain him. She responded at once. Choking back her sobs, and bathing her face to efface as much as possible the outward signs of her misery, she presently whispered that I might trust her now.

"Only you must promise not to leave me—promise to keep near me, Mary?"

"I will, Lilian, if there be no objection made to my doing so."

At first it seemed as if no objection would be made. When Lilian was ushered, awe-struck and silent, into the darkened room, where the spirit was already struggling to free itself from the weakened body, I saw the dying man's eyes turn upon us with a faint gleam of satisfaction; and I was about to follow her to his bedside, the nurse's warning looks telling me that my assistance would soon be required, when the latter beckoned me toward her, where she stood just outside the door.

"Something on his mind, miss; can't die till it is told," whispered the woman, as she made a gesture for me to close the door and leave the father and child together alone.

I was not a little startled; but stood hesitating on the threshold of the room a moment, not quite liking to leave Lilian alone, inexperienced as she was, with the dying man, yet still more averse to be present at any family revelations, when, in reply, I suppose, to some whispered question from him, Lilian said,

"Only the nurse and Miss Haddon, dear papa."

"You have taken to her—and she likes you, I think—she may be able to help you," slowly and brokenly said Mr. Farrar. "Yes; send the other away. Only Miss Haddon and yourself."

I hesitated no longer. Telling the nurse to remain in the adjoining room, I re-entered, and, carefully closing the door, advanced toward Lilian, on her knees by the bedside, with her face hidden upon the hand she held. I put my arm round her, and said, with quiet distinctness, for I saw that there was no time to be lost in words,

"If Lilian needs a friend, you may trust me, Mr. Farrar, for I love her."

His fast glazing eyes rested upon me for a moment, as he murmured,

"Haddon of Haddon;" and then his gaze and his thoughts wandered away again.

"Is there anything you wish to have done, Mr. Farrar?" I presently asked, fancying that he was trying to concentrate his mind upon something, and found an increasing difficulty in so doing.

"Send for—Markham—bring the draft of—"

"Your will?" I asked, rapidly connecting the name, which I knew to be that of his lawyer, with the word "draft," and hoping that I thus followed out his meaning.

"Yes—will. Haddon of Haddon." Even at that moment, I saw he attributed my power of catching his meaning to be a consequence of my being a Haddon of Haddon.

"I will send at once, Mr. Farrar." I went to the door, told the nurse to bring the butler to me without a moment's delay, and waited outside until he came.

"Is my poor master—"

"Do not speak, except to answer a question, please, Saunders; but listen carefully. Do you know the address of Mr. Farrar's solicitor, of both his private residence and the office?"

"Yes, miss."

"If you cannot ride, send a groom to the railway-station without a moment's delay; and telegraph to Mr. Markham, at both his residence and the office, these words: 'Mr. Farrar is dying; come at once, and bring the draft of the will.' Please repeat it."

He repeated the words; and then with an answering nod to my one word, "Immediately," went off to do my bidding.

I turned into the room again, closing the door. I had obeyed Mr. Farrar promptly and literally, as at such a crisis it seemed best to do; but I could not see the importance of the proceeding. Lilian was his only child, and would not suffer any pecuniary loss even if there were no will. But one thing struck me, even at that moment: it was singular that a business man like Mr. Farrar should have delayed making a will until now. And why did he appear so troubled and restless? Why did he look anywhere but into his child's eyes, raised so tenderly and lovingly to his?

"Dear papa, speak to me—look at me!" she pleaded.

"Eighty thousand, and business worth—"

"Oh papa, darling; one little word to your child. I'm Lilian, papa."

"Keys—cabinet—Haddon of Haddon."

I followed the direction of his eyes, went softly and quickly to the dressing-table, brought from it several bunches of keys, ranged them separately on the counterpane before him, and pointed to each, watching his eyes for the answer.

"This. And now which key?" I held each key up, and slowly passed it over the ring until his eyes told me that I had come upon the right one; then, again following the direction of his eyes, I went toward a cabinet, which stood between the windows opposite his bed, and unlocked it. It opened with doors, upon a nest of drawers; and I pointed to each, going slowly down one side and up to the other until I had found the right one. It contained a small sealed and addressed packet and a bundle of letters. I held up the letters first.

"Burn!"

"I will burn them, Mr. Farrar."

"Burn!"

I saw that it must be done at once; put them into the fender, struck a match, and set light to them, stirring them well about until they were only tinder; for a suspicion had crossed my mind that it was quite possible there might be something connected with Mr. Farrar's past life, the evidence of which it was desirable to keep from his daughter's knowledge. At any rate, he had a right to have his letters destroyed if he so wished it, and his mind was manifestly relieved by its being done.

"Parcel!"

I brought the little packet to his bedside.

"Do you wish anything to be done with this, Mr. Farrar?"

He looked at it a moment, and then turned his eyes upon his child.

"Forgive—be good to her."

"To whom, dear papa?" murmured Lilian,

"Sister."

"Auntie! Dear papa, do not you know that I love her?" she sobbed out.

"Haddon of Haddon—send it."

"Send this packet to the person to whom it is addressed, Mr. Farrar?" I asked, beginning to find a clue to the mystery, as I solemnly added, "I will." So far I had interpreted his meaning, but I presently saw that was not sufficient. The eyes wandering from Lilian to the packet, and

from the packet to me, told that there was still something to be done before his mind would be set at rest. I looked at the two or three lines in his own handwriting on the packet, and, after a moment's hesitation, said, "This is addressed to your daughter, Marian; and I think you wish Lillian to promise to be good to her sister, Mr. Farrar?" I saw I had hit upon his meaning once more.

"Yes; good to her."

"Sister!" ejaculated Lillian. "Have I a sister, dear papa—living?"

He lay unconscious a few moments, murmuring something about "mountains, and peat-smoke, and a cottage home," dwelling apparently upon some familiar scenes of the past. But the thought presently grew as wandering and disjointed as the words, and the light was gradually fading out of the eyes. I now watched him with grave anxiety, all my fears aroused lest there should be some very serious necessity for making a will, after all.

It was a momentary relief when the door opened and the doctor entered the room. But my hopes very quickly faded when I saw him stand inactive, looking gravely down at his patient's face, and then, with a pitiful look at Lillian's bowed head, and an expressive glance at me, turn quietly away. I followed him out of the room.

"Will he rally again, do you think, Dr. Wheeler, sufficiently to be able to sign a will?"

He stopped in the act of putting on his gloves, turning his eyes upon me in some surprise.

"A will! Surely a man of business habits like Mr. Farrar has done that long ago. He has been quite sufficiently warned to be aware of his danger, Miss Haddon. But"—after a pause—"it cannot be of very vital importance. There is but one child, and of course she takes all; though I should have given him credit for tying it securely up to her, in the event of her falling into bad hands."

"The lawyer has his instructions, I believe, Dr. Wheeler, and we have telegraphed for him to come at once. Meantime, can anything be done? Is there no stimulant, no—"

"My dear lady, Mr. Farrar is dead already, so far as the capability of transacting business is concerned. It is the insensibility preceding death; and only a question of an hour or so—it may be only of minutes."

Sick at heart, I silently bowed, and turned back into the room again, waiting in solemn stillness until Lillian should need me. The nurse moved softly in and out the room, and I knew why she drew up the blinds to let the last rays of sunlight stream in. The glorious sunset faded into twilight, the twilight deepened into night, and then, with a long, quivering sigh, the spirit stole forth to that other life.

The moment all was over there were innumerable demands upon my energies. Taking my dear Lillian to her aunt's room, I left them together, after giving a private hint to each that it was necessary to stifle her grief as much as possible for the sake of the other. Then I went down-stairs again to give the awe-struck and confused servants the necessary orders which, in their first grief, neither Lillian nor her aunt was capable of giving. They had deputed me to see that all was rightly done.

But the demands upon me increased so rapidly that I quite felt relieved when a servant came to tell me that the lawyer had arrived. I went at once to the library, too much absorbed in the one thought to remember that I was meeting a stranger.

"Too late, I am sorry to find, madam!" said a short, stout, brisk-looking little man, making me a low bow as I entered. He evidently found it somewhat difficult to get the right expression into his jovial face, as he went on to explain that he had been dining out, when the telegram, sent on by his wife, reached him. "I lost not a moment, and have managed to get from Russell Square in an hour and a half." Then, after a keen glance at me, which took in my left hand, he added, "A relative of my late client's, I presume."

"No; my name is Haddon. I have been living here as companion to his daughter, Mr. Markham, and have always been treated as a friend of the family." I said the last words in the hope of inducing him to trust me sufficiently to say anything he might have to say, forgetting that I was talking to a lawyer.

"Very fortunate for Miss Farrar: friends are needed at such times as this," eying me sharply as he went on to add a few conventional words respecting his client's death, and the shock its suddenness must have given his friends; and so affording me an opportunity for the indulgence of a little sentiment.

But I neither felt any nor desired him to think that I did, upon the score of my attachment to Mr. Farrar, so quietly replied, "Death is always solemn, Mr. Markham; but I know too little of Mr. Farrar to mourn him as a friend. His daughter I love."

He nodded pleasantly; satisfied, I think, so far; then, after a moment or two, tried another leading question.

"You were probably present with her at the last?"

"Yes."

"Conscious?"

"Yes, until the last hour."

"And you are aware I was summoned, I presume?"

"I sent for you, Mr. Markham." He waited; and seeing he was still cautious, I went on: "It was Mr. Farrar's wish you should be sent for. He appeared extremely anxious to sign the will; but it was too late."

"Ah, yes; too late! Very sad, very sad;" watching me furtively, as he carefully measured the length and breadth of one of his gloves. "And no last instructions, I suppose; no little confidences or revelations, or anything of that kind?"

I quite understood him; and after a few moments' reflection replied, "Yes; there was a revelation, Mr. Markham—a very startling one; and as you prepared the will, you doubtless know to what I allude?"

I waited a few moments for a reply, but waited in vain. He seemed lost in contemplation of his gloves again. This jovial-looking little man was not quite so effusive as he looked. I tried once more.

"It is unfortunate the will was not signed, since Mr. Farrar so much desired it."

"Certainly; much to be regretted—very much."

I saw that the approach was to be made from my side; and, as it had to be done sooner or later, I said, "But I do not see that its not being signed can make any difference to Miss Farrar, from a pecuniary point of view."

"No; none whatever. Miss Farrar will not be a loser."

"Will her sister?"

"Ah! now we shall understand each other, now you have come to the point, my dear lady," he replied, with brisk cheerfulness, placing a chair for me, and seating himself before me with a confidential air, a hand upon each of his knees. "You see, it was necessary to bring you to that; though you have fenced very well—very neatly indeed—for a lady. I could not desire a better witness in a case, I assure you—on my own side."

I was not quite so charmed with the compliment as he intended me to be, not taking very kindly to the idea of being "brought to it," as he termed it. So I replied, with an air which I flattered myself was as *dégage* as his own, "I thought it as well to tell you that much, Mr. Markham."

"Quite as well, my dear young lady; saving of time, you know. I may now tell you that the person to whom you allude will be a considerable loser by the will I have brought down with me not being signed."

"Is there no previous will, Mr. Markham?"

"There have been several others. But Mr. Farrar was a very careful man, and always destroyed an old will when he made a fresh one. He could never quite satisfy himself as to the exact provision to be made for the—person you have named, and was continually altering his mind, making the sum now greater, now smaller."

"Fortunately, Miss Farrar may be trusted to do all that is right."

"No doubt a very sweet and good young lady; brought up with relations on the mother's side, I understand. I have had the pleasure of meeting her two or three times, and was much struck with her amiability."

"It is something stronger and better than amiability, Mr. Markham," I returned. Somehow that word always offended me with reference to Lilian.

"I am glad to hear it, though amiability has its attractions—for me." After a few moments' contemplative glance at me, he added, "It will be some comfort to her, by-and-by perhaps, to know that the—other is at least three or four years older than herself, and that the mother died while her child was young."

I understood what he meant; "the other," as he termed her—he did not once allude to her by name—had been born before Mr. Farrar's marriage to Lilian's mother.

"Thank you for telling me that, Mr. Markham. It will be a comfort to Lilian."

He nodded and smiled, as though to say I deserved that little encouragement for acquitting myself so well; then became grave and business-like again, as befitted the occasion. Rising from his seat and taking the little black bag which he had brought with him from the table, he said, "You will require no aid from me until after the funeral, when Miss Farrar will have to go through a little legal formality. There will be no complications; everything will be Miss Far-

rar's absolutely. A trifle too absolutely, I should be inclined to say, if she were an ordinary young lady, or likely to fall into bad hands—a money-hunting husband, for instance."

"You know, of course, that Miss Farrar is engaged to be married to Mr. Trafford, Mr. Markham?"

"One of the Warwickshire Traffords?" he returned, with a smile which was instantly suppressed. "Yes; I have heard something of the kind, certainly."

He certainly had; since, as I afterward ascertained, the will had been so made as to very securely protect Lilian's property in the event of such marriage. Then, in reply to a question of mine, he advised me to send to one of the best undertakers (giving me the names and addresses of two or three, but cautiously abstaining from recommending one more than another), and make him responsible for everything being conducted in a fit and proper manner. "That is, I think, the wisest course to pursue, though you are free to carry out Miss Farrar's wishes in any way."

"Thank you."

"Do not name it. I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again upon a less solemn occasion, Miss Haddon." Then looking at his watch, he found that he would have just time to catch the ten o'clock up-train; and, declining my offer of refreshments, he bade me good-night, and hurried out to the fly which he had kept waiting for him.

CHAPTER IX.

ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S CHIVALRY.

WHEN the first hurry and excitement were over, I found that the duties I had to perform were anything but arduous in a house like Mr. Farrar's. I had only to see the genteel solemn undertaker, and give him a *carte-blanche* to furnish the best—out of respect for what I knew would be Mr. Farrar's wishes, I did not add, "and the plainest"—as it is becoming good taste to do. It was equally easy to arrange with the milliners and dress-makers, etc. They all seemed to know precisely what the size of the house required, and assured me in a few hushed words that everything should be in the best taste, and the servants' mourning all that was proper for such an occasion, every shade of difference in position being duly considered. Moreover, the question of my own mourning, which had somewhat puzzled me, was settled upon at once, in a way which would have not a little amused me had the occasion been a different one. "Friend staying in the house—chaperon of Miss Farrar's—everything would be found quite correct."

During the next few days Lilian did not allude to the revelation made by her dying father. I believe she was for the time too much absorbed in grief to be able to realize anything beyond the one fact that she had lost him. Mr. Farrar had been a loving, indulgent father; and though for the first fifteen years of her life she had seen very little of him, that little had shown her all that was best in his nature, and given her faith in him.

On coming to live at the great palace he had built, she found herself treated like a princess in

a fairy tale, surrounded with luxury, the richest gifts showered upon her, a host of attendants ready to obey her slightest whim, and, above all, the orthodox Prince Charming to lay his heart at her feet. It was natural enough that her grief should be strong for the loss of the father to whom she owed all this, as well as a love which was itself stronger and deeper than is lavished upon all daughters.

I did not attempt any commonplaces in the way of condolence; just in a quiet, undemonstrative way made her feel that a friend was near, and trusted to the first terrible anguish wearing itself out. With poor Mrs. Tipper it was different, though I knew her grief was, in its way, just as genuine as Lillian's. I saw that it did her real good to moan and cry, and talk over her brother's goodness, generosity, wonderful cleverness, and so forth; and fully indulged her when she and I were alone. I am glad to believe that I was of some service to both in the time of need.

Mr. Farrar had no immediate relations to be bidden to the funeral. Mrs. Tipper hesitatingly mentioned something about a cousin in the "green-grocery line;" but presently opined that perhaps "dear Jacob" might object; and he was dropped out of notice. Major Maitland, Lillian's uncle on her mother's side, who promised to attend "if possible," Arthur Trafford, Robert Wentworth, and the doctor, and lawyer, were to be the followers at the funeral.

I saw more of Arthur Trafford during that week of seclusion than I had previously done, and I was more than ever dissatisfied with him. For the first few days Lillian kept her room, almost prostrate from the shock which had come upon her at a time when she was so entirely unprepared. I think, too, that it would have appeared to her almost like irreverence for the dead to listen to love-speeches just then. Nevertheless, she might have been expected to turn to him for comfort, and I thought it significant that she did not do so. I acted as messenger between them; and even if I had had a very high opinion of Arthur Trafford before, I should have lost it now. The one only thing I could see in him to respect was his love for Lillian. It was not his lack of love for her, but his too evident love for something else, which offended me. It might be that I was not marked "dangerous" in his estimation, now that circumstances were altered, and that therefore he was more unguarded with me. I can only say he appeared to very great disadvantage under the new aspect of affairs. In our first interview after Mr. Farrar's death, I saw that he was thinking a great deal more of the large fortune which would revert to Lillian than anything besides.

"So I hear there is no will, Miss Haddon?"

"You have made inquiries already, then?" was my mental comment. I knew that the fact was not public property yet, and that he must have taken some pains to find it out.

"I believe not, Mr. Trafford," I coldly returned.

But my coldness was not of the slightest importance. He was too much absorbed in the one thought to notice my manner of speaking.

"And Lillian inherits without restrictions of any kind. Just the kind of man to have made all sorts of unpleasant complications—meant to do it, too—and now my darling is unfettered!"

And in his gratification he so far forgot the *covenances* as to whistle softly to himself, while he carefully readjusted one of Nasmyth's little gems, which hung slightly askant upon the wall.

"She says she knows how much you are sympathizing with her just now, Mr. Trafford."

He colored to his temples as he replied,

"Of course I am, Miss Haddon. It's—it's a great loss, make the best of it, to an only child; and it came upon her so suddenly, poor girl." Adding, a little consciously (I dare say it was not pleasant to have me silently eying him as I was doing), "Tell her, please, that I am longing to do what I may to comfort her; beg her, for my sake, to keep up. It will never do to let her get low and desponding, you know. Hers is a nature of the tendril kind—so entirely dependent upon those she loves."

"I do not think so, Mr. Trafford; and I do not think that those she loves will find it so. At any rate, she does not give me the idea of being weak."

"I meant only the kind of delicacy which accompanies refinement, and which is so charming in a woman, Miss Haddon," adding, a little more pointedly than was necessary, I thought, "such fragility as arouses the chivalry of men."

"As the chivalry is dying out, I must hope that the exciting cause is getting scarcer, Mr. Trafford."

We eyed each other a moment, and then tacitly agreed on an armed truce. I left him, and went to Lillian's room with lagging steps and a heavy heart.

"Arthur feels it terribly," she said, lifting her eyes to mine as I entered the room, fortunately for me, taking it as a matter of course that he did. "Dear papa was so good to him."

"He hopes you will bear up for his sake, dear Lillian."

"I will, indeed I will. Tell him he shall not find me selfish by-and-by."

Still no allusion to the one subject which was engrossing all my thoughts. It was not until the evening after the funeral that she approached it, and then she waited until she and I were alone before doing so.

Flushing painfully, and with downcast eyes, she hesitatingly began,

"Have you been thinking of—of what dear papa told us—that night, Mary?"

"Yes, dear, I have; a great deal."

"I am so thankful that you, and you only, were present."

She paused a few moments, and I tried to help her.

"I think that there is no doubt—you have a sister, and that the packet, which I have taken care of, is intended for her, Lillian."

Taking it from my desk, I showed her the words on it in her father's handwriting: "Quarter's allowance due 24th for Marian," with an address, "Mrs. Pratt, Green Street, Islington."

"Marian! Yes, that was the name," she murmured.

"I have since found out that she was born three or four years before Mr. Farrar was married to your mother, Lillian."

A bright hope sprung to her eyes.

"Perhaps he was married before, Mary?"

"I do not think that is likely, or it would be

known. But I know you will none the less do what is just and right."

"I shall *all the more* do what is right—I owe her so much more. If wrong has been done, it is for me to make what reparation I can. And—Mary, try to always remember how anxious he was to—" She broke down, an expression in her face which showed how deep was the wound which her loving, sensitive nature had received. Her grief was so much the harder to bear for the knowledge that her dead was less perfect than she had believed him to be. She was already obliged to plead for him.

I knew that, fragile as she looked, and tender and yielding as she had hitherto seemed, it arose more from humility at finding herself blessed as ordinary mortals rarely are, than from any lack of strength. We had not seen the best of Lilian Farrar yet. Least of all did her lover know her. Already I could have given a better reason for loving her than he could have done.

She was musing over the address.

"Mrs. Pratt, Green Street, Islington." Is that where—my sister is staying, do you think, Mary? Would it not be better to go there?"

"Would you like me to go for you, Lilian?"

For a moment she looked not a little relieved by the suggestion; but, after a little reflection, appeared to put the temptation to avail herself of it aside.

"Not if I ought to go myself. Do you think that I ought to do so, Mary?"

I replied with a question:

"What do you intend to do when you have found Marian" (sister did not come readily to my lips, and I used the name instead), "dear Lilian?"

"Ask her to come to live here, and do all I can to make up for the wrong done to her mother"—in a low but clear and decided tone.

Even at that moment, with her grief so fresh upon her, though it cost her a sharp agony to use the word, she called it a "wrong." But although my sympathies were entirely with her, I thought it right to remind her of one thing.

"There is the possibility that she may not be the kind of companion you would desire to have always with you, Lilian."

"I want to do right, Mary," she replied, putting my little attempt at sophistry aside.

I nevertheless made one more little feeble protest on the side of expediency.

"There are your aunt and Mr. Trafford also to be considered, you know."

"I want to do what is right," she repeated. In her faith and inexperience, she had no misgivings as to their concurrence in all that was right; or if she had doubts with regard to one, she would not allow so much to herself.

"Therefore I think you ought not to make up your mind too decidedly as to what it will be right to do until you have seen her; then perhaps you might trust to your instincts."

"And, Mary," she said, a little consciously, "I think I would rather not name it to any one but you, until everything is settled. We can explain to auntie and Arthur afterward, you know."

I believed that auntie was included to make it appear less personal. She would not have hesitated a moment about taking the dear little lady into her confidence; but she *did* hesitate about telling her lover until it would be too late to

undo what was done, though she would not acknowledge so much.

"Very well, dear; we will go together as soon as you feel quite equal to it. We might go up to town by the twelve-o'clock train some morning, and take a cab from the terminus to Islington."

"I am equal to it now, Mary; and I shall not rest until we have been."

I saw that nothing would be gained by delay—her anxiety would only increase, and therefore promptly acceded.

"Shall we say to-morrow, Lilian?"

"Yes, please."

I quietly made the necessary arrangements; and just before we were setting forth told Mrs. Tipper that Lilian and I were going to town upon business, and that we would tell her all about it on our return. She was very easily satisfied, falling in with my opinion that it could do Lilian no harm, and might do her good, to be obliged to take some interest in the outside world; too single-minded to suspect more than the words told her. Single-minded! The rarest and best quality I have known during my checkered life—the one quality above all others which I have learned to respect—is single-mindedness. It may not always accompany large intellect, though I believe the very largest is never without it, and it is rather looked down upon by the world in general. Single-minded people are proverbially the butts of the Talleyrands of society, though the latter are more frequently baffled by them than they are willing to allow.

I saw what the effort cost Lilian—how painfully she shrunk from doing what she nevertheless would not allow herself to depute another to do—as she sat with me, white and still, in the railway-carriage. It did me real good to see her rise to the occasion in this way; and it bore out my previously formed opinion of her capability. I was also glad to feel that I was of some little use to her. Respecting the result of our errand I was not so much at ease. What was this sister? Would she be found worthy the devotion and self-sacrifice of such as Lilian? and if not, would it be given the latter to see that it would be unwise to bring her to Fairview? Until I saw the sister, I would make no attempt to bias Lilian's judgment, trusting more to her instinct than my own wisdom in the matter. Moreover, although I knew that Mrs. Tipper would easily enough be brought to see that right was right, I was by no means so sure that Arthur Trafford would be found equally amenable. Even should he approve of Lilian's recognition of a strange sister, he was not at all likely to approve of her being brought to reside at Fairview. I knew that he meant to press for an early marriage; and I knew that he was not the man to take kindly to the idea of a stranger living with them, whatever her claims might be. But I kept my doubts and fears to myself, preserving a calm face for Lilian's eyes. More than once the thought crossed my mind that the daughter he had only designated as "Marian" might be married, and was, in fact, the Mrs. Pratt to whom the address on the packet referred. In such case, it would be easy enough to do right without bringing about any unpleasant complications. The address seemed, I fancied, to indicate a poor neighborhood; and if "Marian" should prove

to be the wife of a struggling man, a portion of Mr. Farrar's wealth could not be better employed than in giving him some assistance.

CHAPTER X.

MARIAN.

As I had expected, the neighborhood through which we were driven did not appear to be inhabited by the most prosperous class of people. We presently found ourselves in Green Street; and when the cabman drew up before a retail shoemaker's shop, we saw at once that there could be no doubt about its being the place we wanted. The name of Pratt ran up and down and across the house, in every direction, backward and forward, and sideways and lengthways; to say nothing of a large blue boot swinging over the pavement, conveying the information that this was the veritable Pratt's, and there was no other in the three kingdoms who sold boots and shoes so good and cheap, and beautiful to behold, as did Jonathan Pratt. Telling the cabman to wait, I entered a sort of bower of boots and shoes (they hung all round the door-way, and were ticketed "Great Bargains," "Alarming Sacrifices," "The Princesses' Favorite," and so forth), closely followed by Lilian.

"I'll attend to you in half a moment, ladies," said a stout, brisk, good-tempered-looking man, as he put some small shoes into a parcel, and counted out the change to a customer at the counter, adding to her, "You've got the best of me again, Mrs. Gooch, by a good threepence, that you have! There, take 'em away quick, before I change my mind."

"Oh, you always say that, Mr. Pratt," laughed the good woman, gathering up her parcel and change, and pleasantly wishing him good-day.

Evidently Mr. Pratt was a favorite with his customers. I afterward heard that he was famous for his jokes and good-nature, as well as for a keen eye to business.

"Now, ladies," he went on, turning smilingly toward us, as the good woman left the shop, and rubbing his hands briskly together, "here I am ready to go through it all again, though you ladies always get the best of me in a bargain, you know you do. Eh—" Falling back a little as Lilian put up her veil, and even in that somewhat obscured light seeing that she was very different from the generality of "ladies" he had to deal with, he added, "I beg your pardon, miss, I'm sure. What may I have the pleasure of showing you?" For Mr. Pratt prided himself upon his ability to suit his manners to his customers.

"You are Mr. Pratt?" she began, hesitatingly.

"Yes, miss; that's me, for certain."

Lilian looked toward me, and I said,

"Will you allow us to speak with Mrs. Pratt? Our business is with her, if she will kindly see us for a few minutes."

"Mrs. Pratt! To be sure, ladies; to be sure. Please to step this way." We followed him into a small back shop; and after putting two chairs for us, and—I suppose from force of habit—placing two little squares of carpet at our feet, he opened a side door, and called out, "Mother, you're wanted."

Lilian, who looked very white and agitated, slipped her hand into mine; I clasped it firmly, waiting not a little anxiously for her sake.

A slight little woman, with a gentle, good face and soft dark eyes, looking very neat in a clean lilac-print gown and large white apron, came hesitatingly into the room. One glance at her showed us that it was not she whom we were seeking. Though her slight figure made her perhaps appear younger than she really was, she could not have been much less than fifty. We were for the moment both too much absorbed in the one thought to speak; and after glancing timidly first toward her husband and then at us, she asked,

"Is it change wanted, Jonathan?"

"These ladies want to speak to you, Susan," he replied, looking a little surprised at our silence.

Lilian flushed up, glancing pleadingly toward me again. It was certainly rather embarrassing. I was casting about in my mind to find some way of approaching the subject without committing ourselves, in the event of their not being in the secret, when fortunately Mr. Pratt's attention was called toward the shop door, where commenced a brisk patter of words with reference to some of the bargains. With this gentle-looking woman it would be much easier to say what we wanted to say than with her husband, more accustomed to gauge the worth of words. So I plucked up my courage, and began:

"We have come to you, Mrs. Pratt, in the hope of obtaining some information"—I suddenly thought of new tactics, and said, "Is the name of Farrar known to you?"

"Farrar!" She put her hand to her side, and sunk down on to the nearest chair, gazing at me without a word.

Seeing that I was, at any rate, so far correct as to be speaking to the right Mrs. Pratt, I went on:

"Perhaps you know that Mr. Farrar has been ill for some time?"

"Yes, miss; I know that."

"Do you also know that his illness terminated in death ten days ago?" I said, speaking slowly, and carefully separating my words, in order to in some measure break the shock; for though she was not the "Marian" we were seeking, her agitation showed me that they were in some way connected.

"Dead!" she murmured—"dead!" as she sat gazing at us, or rather at some vision which the words seemed to have called up before her mental eyes.

I thought it best now to go straight to the point, and said,

"Before his death, Mr. Farrar expressed a wish that this packet should be delivered to the person to whom it is addressed; and therefore we thought it best to bring it ourselves to you, Mrs. Pratt."

She mechanically took it from my hand, looking down at it as though she were in a dream.

"But," eagerly began Lilian, "you see it is written above, 'For Marian;' and before he died, dear papa told me—"

"You are Miss Farrar?" ejaculated Mrs. Pratt, turning toward Lilian with a strange expression in her eyes—a mixture of curiosity and shame and confusion, it appeared to me.

"Yes, I am his daughter; and very anxious to obey his last request. He told me that I have a sister, and wished me to be good to her. He meant to provide for her, and his will was prepared; but his illness was very sudden at—the last, and the lawyer did not arrive in time."

I had thought it only just to tell Lillian what Mr. Markham said, and she eagerly caught at the idea that her father had intended to provide for the other.

Mrs. Pratt murmured something about its being very kind of Mr. Farrar, her eyes downcast, and hands fluttering about her apron-strings.

"We thought it best to bring this ourselves, Mrs. Pratt, because we wish to be in communication with Marian," I said; "and of course you know where she is. You know her, do you not?"

"Yes, miss," replied Mrs. Pratt. She sat very pale and still a few moments, and then went on, slowly and hesitatingly, "If you really wish to see her—"

Lilian very earnestly assured her that she did.

"Then will you please to come this way, ladies?" she whispered, still, I fancied, a little nervously and doubtfully.

We rose at once, and followed her into the passage, up a narrow staircase, and into a front room on the first floor. One glance showed me that this was very different from what might have been expected in Mrs. Pratt's best room—different in the way of being very pretentious. It was, in fact, evidently intended to be considered a drawing-room, and was crowded with tawdry finery, which not even its exquisite cleanliness could make to look respectable. Gaudy furniture, gaudy curtains, gaudy vases, with quantities of artificial flowers; a round table spread with gaudily bound books, etc.—all looking in such strange contrast with Mrs. Pratt herself in her homely simplicity.

"Will you tell us where to find my sister?" eagerly began Lillian, after a hasty glance around.

"Sister!" said Mrs. Pratt. "You are not ashamed to call her that; or—is it that you do not know?"

"I have guessed that—that her mother was to be pitied," said Lillian, in a low voice, a crimson flush suffusing her face.

"And you can still call her sister?"

"Yes."

"God bless you, dear young lady! It's only the best and purest could say that. Let me—pray let me."

And before Lillian could prevent her, Mrs. Pratt sunk on her knees and kissed the young girl's hands. It expressed all the more to me, because I judged that Mrs. Pratt was not naturally so emotional as most people. She recovered herself quickly, too. After turning away for a few moments toward the window, where she stood wiping her eyes, she was the same self-contained, quiet-looking little woman we had first seen.

"Please forgive me, ladies; but, as you have guessed, I do know Marian Reed. Her poor mother was my only sister, and since her death Marian has always lived with us. Mr. Farrar has always paid very handsome for her; and she has been brought up like a—lady." Mrs. Pratt hesitated a little over the word, and added, "I mean, compared with people like us—a deal better than my own little ones."

To gain a little time for Lillian, I asked, "How many children have you, Mrs. Pratt?"

"We have seven, miss; but I've a good husband; a better man than Jonathan doesn't breathe; and business is brisk: so we want for nothing."

The latter part of her sentence was meant for a hint, I thought, and I was all the more favorably inclined toward her in consequence. At any rate, we were among honest people.

"Is—Marian in the house now?" inquired Lillian. "May I see her?"

"Once more I noticed the reluctance in Mrs. Pratt's face, as she replied, "Yes, miss; I'll go and tell her."

"No; please do not tell her: let me introduce myself."

Mrs. Pratt consented, and, to be quite honest with us, did not leave the room. Standing at the open door, she called out, "Miss Reed—Marian dear!"

No reply.

"Marian dear, will you please come down for a few minutes?"

"What for?" called out a voice from some upper chamber.

"Somebody wants to see you, dear."

I heard a word which seemed very much like "Bother!" and a sound as of a book thrown down. Then there was a somewhat heavy and leisurely tread descending the stairs.

"Well, what is it?"

A girl of about twenty or twenty-one years of age entered the room, looking as though she had been disturbed and resented it. At sight of her my heart sunk. Lillian's sister! This underbred girl, arrayed in the latest style of elegance as interpreted by Islington. Everything about her was in the extreme of penny-fashion-book style—the largest of chignons, the fluffiest of curls covering her forehead down to her eyebrows, the longest of ribbons streaming down her back, and the latest inventions in the way of imitation jewellery. I am bound to acknowledge that she was, in her way, good-looking, with plenty of dark hair, large round dark eyes, red (not pink) and white complexion, and good though large figure, and yet—could any one in the world be more disappointing as Lillian's sister?

She crossed the room, seated herself with a *dégage* air in a lounging-chair, and, playing with a bunch of trinkets it was then the fashion to call charms, upon her watch-chain, she languidly inquired if we had come about the music lessons.

"Because I have almost made up my mind to engage a gentleman. I require something advanced, you know; and the gentleman who is organist at our church gives lessons to a select few, and—"

"Are you Marian?" asked Lillian, white and trembling.

"I am Miss Reed," very stiffly returned that young lady.

"This young lady is Miss Farrar," I put in, to help Lillian.

"Oh, indeed!" returned Miss Reed.

I saw that the name told her nothing. I knew now that she had never been told her father's name.

With slowly gathering color Mrs. Pratt now came to my assistance. "Mr. Farrar was the gentleman who—paid for your schooling and all

that, Marian dear—the quarterly allowance came from him.”

“And who was he?”

“Your father!” returned her aunt, in a low, broken voice; “and these ladies have come to tell us that he has been ill, and—and—”

“He is dead!” said Marian, taking note of our black clothes, and becoming as pale as one of her complexion could become.

“Come!” I thought, not a little relieved, “she can feel.” But I very quickly found that I had been somewhat premature in giving her credit upon that account. It is possible to feel without the feeling being worth very much. I saw in what way she was touched as she went on, with a little catch in her breath, looking from one to the other of us, “What has he left me?”

We were silent; and putting the right construction upon our silence, she hurriedly added, “You don’t mean to say he hasn’t left me anything, after—”

Without any further anxiety on the score of her feelings, I put in, “Mr. Farrar has left no will, Miss Reed; and all his property comes to this young lady—his daughter.”

“Then I say it is mean, and shameful—down-right shameful! and—”

“Hush, Marian, pray! Marian dear, you forget!” pleaded Mrs. Pratt, laying her hand upon the girl’s arm.

“Am I not his daughter too? Am I not to say a word if I am left a beggar, after being always led on to expect to be a lady? It is shameful, and I do not care who hears me say so!” flashing a look of angry defiance at us.

Lilian sat gazing at her, in her sorrow and disappointment, utterly incapable of uttering a word. It had not occurred to her that she might find this kind of sister. She had probably never before been in contact with any one like Marian Reed, and indeed we had both of us expected to see a very different person from this. If she had been only poor—anything like the children of poor parents generally, there would have been some reason for hope. But now! I afterward found that Mr. Farrar’s very liberal allowance had been expended entirely on Marian Reed herself, Mr. Pratt very decidedly objecting to accept more than a fair remuneration for her board and lodging; and the command of so much money had fostered a natural vanity and love of dress, until she had become the fine lady before us.

“If you will only be good enough to allow me to explain, you will, I think, do Mr. Farrar more justice, as well as spare his daughter, Miss Reed,” I said, in a tone which made her turn sharply toward me with a look and gesture which seemed to say, “And who are you?”

Having succeeded so far as to quiet her, I went on, “Mr. Farrar’s illness terminated rather suddenly at last, Miss Reed; and the lawyer who was summoned did not arrive in time for the will to be signed—”

“But he might have—”

I stopped her again.

“Mr. Farrar did what he could in trusting his daughter to carry out his wishes, and you will find her only too anxious to do all that is right.”

I saw the round, black eyes turn sharply and speculatively upon Lilian for a moment; then she replied, in a slightly mollified tone,

“So much depends upon what people consider right, you know.”

I saw that Lilian was battling against herself, and longed to say to her, “Trust to your instinct, which is altogether against asking this girl to come to live with you. Whatever else you may do, do not yield to a false sentiment in this one thing.” Unfortunately (or fortunately; looking at the question from this distance of time, I am not really sure which I ought to write), Lilian did not obey her instinct. In her anxiety lest she should not carry out her father’s wishes, she was afraid to trust to her own feelings in the matter. When Marian a little impatiently asked,

“I should like to know what you call right?”

Lilian replied, in a low, faltering voice,

“He wished me to be good to you; and I came to-day to ask you to live with me, and—be my sister—for—dear papa’s sake. He has left a great deal of money, and quite intended you to share it.”

“That is,” I hastened to interpose, seeing the effect of the word “share” upon the other—“Mr. Farrar no doubt meant that the allowance which you have hitherto received should be continued to you, Miss Reed. I have reason to think something of that kind was to be done.”

“That would be very kind and generous. Wouldn’t it, Marian dear?” said Mrs. Pratt.

“And” (I went on) “perhaps you would prefer remaining with the friends who have been so good to you, and going on as before, Miss Reed?”

But Miss Reed very quickly gave us to understand that she did not prefer it; though Mrs. Pratt put in a gentle word or two on my side:

“You have always been very comfortable with us, dear!”

Comfortable! That evidently would not be sufficient to satisfy Marian Reed any longer.

“I have been brought up as a young lady, aunt” (at present she had no doubts upon the point); “and learned music, and French, and dancing, and all that; so papa must have intended me to come to live with him sometime, and it seems only fair that my sister should ask me—What’s your name, dear? It seems funny my not knowing your name, doesn’t it?”

“My name is Lilian.”

“Lilian! What a pretty name—quite charming!”

I saw that it was to be; and that the only thing I could now do was to gain a little delay; so I said,

“Of course you will want a little time to prepare, Miss Reed.” She was about to protest; but I quietly went on, “It will be necessary to procure mourning, and so forth.”

“Oh yes; I had forgotten that,” she replied, eying Lilian’s black dress, nearly covered with crape. “Of course I shall,” adding, a little apologetically, “You mustn’t expect me to feel exactly the same as you about it, you know. Of course I am very sorry, and all that; but I do not remember ever having seen papa; so it isn’t to be expected that I can feel quite as much as though I had always known him.”

“No,” replied Lilian, with what I fancied to be a sigh of relief. She would have even jealously resented this stranger claiming the privilege to share her grief as well as her money. Had he not loved her—and had she not loved him?

There was silence again for a few moments, which was broken by Marian Reed, the most self-possessed of any of us, for even I, the least interested, felt somewhat nonplussed by the aspect of affairs:

"It will take me a good week or ten days to get *distangy* mourning," with a glance toward Lilian, as she gave that evidence of having learned French. "Suppose we say ten days?"

"Very well," replied Lilian, rising.

"But you haven't given me the address yet, you know. And you must excuse my reminding you that there's been nothing said about last quarter's remittance, which was due last week, and which we have been a great deal inconvenienced by not receiving."

I hastened to put the packet into her hand.

"This was placed ready for us, Miss Reed; but for the address upon it we might not have found you; and I dare say you will find it correct."

"Oh yes; no doubt," taking it with a negligent air, in amusing contrast with her next words: "And then there's the mourning, you know; that will have to be paid for; and good mourning is so expensive."

"Oh yes, of course; I beg your pardon," said Lilian, hurriedly taking out her pocket-book. "This is the address; and—no; I find I have not enough money with me; but I will send you a check when I get home, if that will do. And of course you will like to make some little acknowledgment to the friends who have been always so kind to you."

"Of course I should, if you send enough," sharply replied Miss Reed.

The color rose in Lilian's cheeks.

"I will send what you please."

"Well, you couldn't say more than that, I'm sure," graciously responded Miss Reed. "But I'd rather leave it to you."

"Will fifty pounds be enough?"

Mrs. Pratt looked awe-struck; but her niece, who evidently prided herself upon *sangfroid*, calmly said,

"Oh yes, quite enough; thank you."

"If you will let us know the day and train, we will drive to the station to meet you," said Lilian, her voice sinking lower.

"Yes; I will write and tell you when I am ready, dear." And after going through the ceremony of shaking hands and bidding us good-morning, Miss Reed sunk languidly back into her seat again, leaving her aunt to show us out.

As we reached the foot of the stairs, we could see into a side room, the door of which was open, and observing some children sitting round a table, I asked,

"Are these your little ones, Mrs. Pratt?"

"Yes, miss. Would you like to walk in?"

I did wish to walk in, and availed myself of the invitation, notwithstanding poor Lilian's pleading look. She was, I knew, anxious to get away as quickly as possible. But I wanted to judge for myself as to whether the contrast between Mrs. Pratt's children and their cousin was as great as between herself and that young lady.

Seven children, whose ages seemed to range between about five and fifteen, were seated round a neatly spread table at dinner; and though the fare seemed of the homeliest, they were partaking it with quiet enjoyment under the supervision

of an elder sister, a girl of about fifteen, pretty, and fresh, and neat-looking in her print frock, altogether as refreshing a contrast to the cousin up-stairs as could well be conceived.

After one little shy, blushing acknowledgment of our greeting, she attended to her business again.

"Don't stare at the ladies, Billy," she whispered, guiding the spoonful of rice, which, in his astonishment at seeing us, he was sending over his shoulder, toward his mouth.

"She's quite a mother to them already," said Mrs. Pratt, brightening up wonderfully in the presence of her children. "I can't find it in my heart to let her go to service until the others are grown up a bit. We can't spare Susy, can we, dears?"

This seemed to two or three of the younger ones to indicate that there had been some proposition to take her, and that we were the delinquents. But we hastened to reassure them, and tears were soon dried again, though two or three pairs of sharp little eyes kept watch over Susy.

How heartily I wished that this had been the sister we were seeking, this modest, good, unpretending Susy! I think the same thought was in Lilian's mind as she wistfully eyed her. The tinkling of a bell sounded in some back place, and Susy said to one of her little brothers,

"Run, Tommy, and tell Miss Reed dinner will soon be ready."

Then I noticed a tray ready spread on a side-table; and in reply to my look of inquiry Mrs. Pratt explained,

"Miss Reed" (she was evidently more accustomed to call her Miss Reed than Marian) "lives up-stairs, ladies, since she went for a year to boarding-school; she prefers it."

"And so do we," heartily put in her husband, entering at the moment. "We bring our little ones up to work, ladies. *They* won't get two hundred a year without earning it, and I won't have fine notions put into their heads. I shall be satisfied, I tell them, if they grow up respectable, and not ashamed to look any one in the face. Miss Reed likes to be a fine lady, and we've got no right to object to that. I don't take any more from her than what pays for her lodging and keep—not a penny; and of course she's a right to do what she likes with the rest; but she never pleased me more than when she made up her mind to keep to her own rooms. Excuse me, ladies; but I've been accustomed to speak my mind, and somehow I always feel bound to say what my mind is when Miss Reed's been talked about."

Lilian was silent. I murmured something to the effect that I quite agreed with him as regarded making his children as much as possible independent of circumstances.

"Miss Reed's going away, father," said Mrs. Pratt. "These ladies came to tell her that—the gentleman is dead."

"Dead!"

"And this young lady is Miss Farrar, Jonathan. She has come to ask Marian to go and live with her."

It took Mr. Pratt some little time to get over the surprise; but I soon saw that it was not altogether disagreeable one.

"It is so good of you, dear young lady!" mur-

mured Mrs. Pratt, who scarcely took her eyes from Lillian's face. "So much more than Miss Reed could expect."

"You may well say that, mother!" ejaculated Mr. Pratt. "It is more than she could expect—a deal. Though, to tell the truth, I sha'n't be so very down-hearted about her going, for my part. We can let our rooms again, and—well, as I said before, I don't want any of our young ones to grow up after Miss Reed's pattern." At a murmured word from his wife, he put his hand for a moment on her shoulder. "Mrs. Pratt is more soft-hearted, and she naturally feels more for her sister's child than I do; but she's been a good deal put upon, and she'll see it's all for the best that Miss Reed should go, by-and-by. I can only say that she's kept true to her promise to her dying sister, and the girl can't say anything to the contrary. Her aunt's been a regular slave to her, always ready to cocker up one who— Well, there, mother; I won't say any more: what's gone's past; and I hope Miss Reed will be satisfied now, that's all. I never denied but what she's a fine lass enough—to look at; and when she's got all she wants in the way of being fine enough, I dare say she'll be all right. Anyhow, she needn't be afraid of our shaming her. Business is good, and like to be; but if it wasn't, it would make no difference; we shall not run after her. If she likes to come and see her aunt sometimes, I think it would do her good, because, as I've said before, Mrs. Pratt's soft-hearted about her; but even she wouldn't be soft-hearted enough to run after a girl who didn't want to see her."

"Of course you will come to see us at Fairview, Mrs. Pratt," said Lillian, in her earnest, unmistakably sincere way; "and of course she will come often to see you."

"One thing we needn't go far to see, miss," said Mr. Pratt, who was evidently impressed in Lillian's favor. "I know the real thing when I see it; and that's why the Brummagem up-stairs doesn't go down with me. There—there; I've done, mother. Good-day, ladies; and thank you kindly for us."

And after shaking hands with Mrs. Pratt and her children, Lillian pressing her purse into Susy's hand, we took our departure, escorted to the cab by Mr. Pratt.

CHAPTER XI.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

Our journey back to Fairview was a very silent one. Under the plea of being tired, Lillian lay back in the railway-carriage with her eyes closed and veil down. I did not disturb her, and for the best of reasons: I could think of nothing very cheering which could be honestly said. Marian Reed was an unpleasant fact, which could not be argued out of existence, nor even smoothed over by all the words in the dictionary combined.

The carriage was waiting for us at the railway-station; and only just as we arrived at Fairview did I venture to speak:

"Are you going to tell Mrs. Tipper to-night, Lillian?"

"Yes. And you will help me, will you not, Mary? I shall depend upon that," clinging

closer to me, and feeling, I knew, terribly in need of help.

"Of course I will, if you wish it, Lillian. But I must stipulate that you first come to my room and rest for an hour."

She obeyed me like a child—utterly worn out in spirit, holding my hand fast in hers as she lay on the couch, and murmuring every now and again,

"Help me, Mary; don't leave me."

"Since I have promised, I suppose I must, my dear," I replied, in a rallying tone. "But I do not generally care much about helping people who do not help themselves."

She yielded to a burst of tears.

"That's better, dear—far more sensible," I remarked, wiping my own eyes: "one generally gets on more comfortably after availing one's self of that privilege."

"Privilege?"

"Right," if you prefer the word; one of our rights. If one could attain the end by more dignified means, it might be as well; but the grandest of heroines occasionally shed tears, so I suppose it is the best known method of making one's self comfortable, and harmless enough when used with discretion—as heroines use it."

"Ah, Mary, you are not talking like yourself! When you talk like that, I sometimes think it is to conceal—"

"Well, dear; why do you not go on? To conceal what—that I am *not* a heroine?" I asked, in a jesting tone, only too glad to be able to draw her sufficiently away from painful reflection for a little nonsense-talk.

"I sometimes think that, having larger needs than other people—"

"Well, dear?"

"Which needs have not been satisfied—"

"There is something still required to make a complete sentence, you know."

"Are large needs ever quite satisfied, Mary?"

"Dear Lillian—dear sister—perhaps not."

"Mary, you said *sister*!" A soft flush in her face and eager love in her eyes.

"Because I meant it, I suppose, dearie; I can give no other reason," I said, trying still to keep the jesting tone. "If you do not object to an elderly sister?"

"Not if elder sisters do not put themselves out of reach of the sympathy of the younger."

"Put themselves," I repeated, musingly.

"May not circumstances do that for them?"

"When will you tell me—dear Mary, when will you let me feel that you really are like a sister to me?"

At which I morbidly shrunk back into my shell again.

"When my love-story is finished you shall hear it."

"Finished! As though a love-story ever *could* be finished—as though you or I would care to have one, if it could! But you have not told me even the beginning."

"You have found out that for yourself, dearie."

"And am I right in thinking—I hope I am not; but— Dear Mary, am I to say exactly what I think?"

"Exactly."

"Then sometimes I think that one you loved—Mary, is he dead?"

Dead! Philip dead! I laughed in spirit. If he were dead, should I be alive—in this way? I did not reflect that my silence and the few tears which stole down my cheeks might seem to bear out her theory as to my having something to regret. But I presently shook myself free of sentiment, smilingly observing that we could not afford the luxury of analyzing our feelings just then. Sentiment would be only a stumbling-block in our way, when we needed all the nerve, courage, and steady self-control we could muster.

"To begin with, would you like me to make matters smooth and pleasant with Mrs. Tipper before dinner, Lillian? You would then, perhaps, find less difficulty in broaching the subject to Mr. Trafford, if, as I fancy, you prefer doing so in our presence?"

"Yes; I do prefer that ever so much, and I shall be glad if you will tell auntie, Mary."

As I had anticipated, we found no difficulty in bringing the dear little lady to our way of thinking. As soon as she had in some degree recovered her astonishment at the revelation, she expressed her entire approval of what had been done. She was not a little shocked and distressed to find her brother had been less perfect than she had imagined him to be; but it appeared to her a natural and right thing that Marian Reed should be asked to come to reside at Fairview. Even my little "aside"—which I thought necessary, lest her expectations should be unduly raised—to the effect that we did not as yet feel quite sure Marian would be a desirable person to live with, had no weight with Mrs. Tipper. She could only look at the question from one point of view—whether it was right to do as Lillian had done. Whether the other would be more or less pleasant to get on with was, in her estimation, beside the matter. There were no more complications in Mrs. Tipper's estimate of right and wrong than there were in her niece's.

Our real difficulty was to come; and although she said no word about it, I knew Lillian felt that it was. Arthur Trafford was dining with us; he had very rarely missed coming since Mr. Farrar's death. But it was not until after dinner, when we had returned to the morning-room (we all preferred its cosiness to the drawing-room splendor now), that the subject was approached.

In reply to her lover's question, which had been asked more than once during dinner, and was now repeated, as to how she had got through the day, Lillian drew nearer to me, and murmured,

"Mary and I went to town, Arthur."

"To town! What for? Why in the world did you not tell me you were going? It was not like you, Lillian, to say no word to me about your intention last night," with, I fancied, a rather suspicious glance toward me as he went on: "I do not like the idea of your running about like a mere—"

She looked very pale, seeking, I think, in her mind for the best way of commencing.

"I was obliged to go; and you must not try not to blame me for having said nothing about it to you first, Arthur," she said, in a low, tremulous tone, which I saw flattered his vanity as proof of his power, and the timid, yielding spirit, which he was pleased to think so characteristic of her. Not that he wished her to be timid and yielding to any one but himself, or was ready to make

sufficient allowance for her acting according to her nature upon all occasions.

"Blame you, darling! I am only anxious that you should be *properly* protected"—with an emphasis and glance in my direction which would have given me some reason to quake, had Mr. Trafford's friendship been of great moment to me. But I was quite aware that, little as I had been in favor before, I had been steadily and surely declining in his estimation since Mr. Farrar's death; and being, therefore, quite prepared for what was to come, I took no offense at the "properly."

Lillian slipped her hand into mine.

"We were quite safe, Arthur; it is not that—" She hesitated a moment, then added, crimsoning to her temples, "There is something to tell you. Poor papa made a—communication to Mary and me the night—at the last, Arthur."

"A communication!" I saw he was now really disturbed; too much so to make objection to the "Mary and me." "What do you mean, Lillian? The—will—"

"The property was to have been shared" (she again carelessly used the word "shared," in her indifference to the money part of the question) "between me and—another, if papa had lived to sign his will, Arthur."

"But he did *not* live to sign it!" he ejaculated, heaving a great sigh of relief, and, somewhat to my amusement, glancing triumphantly toward me.

I saw now that he had jumped to the conclusion that I was the "other" alluded to.

"No; but his last wishes would be binding to me, Arthur, even if I had not given a promise," said Lillian.

To spare her—I could see that he was on the verge of giving expression to what was in his thoughts, which would have unnecessarily pained as well as astonished her—I came to her assistance.

"Mr. Farrar made a revelation to Lillian and me during his last moments, Mr. Trafford. There is another daughter living, and he begged Lillian to do the justice which he himself was not spared to do, though the will was prepared in which Marian was provided for."

"Another daughter! Share!"

In his first astonishment and dismay he was only able to compass those two facts.

But he presently added,

"He must have been raving. It would be the height of folly to take such a statement as that seriously; of course he did not know what he was saying."

"It has been proved to be true, Mr. Trafford. There *is* another daughter, and Lillian and I have seen her."

He had had a few moments for reflection, and something of the truth, I think, began to dawn upon him. Looking toward me, he said,

"I never heard that Mr. Farrar was married more than once, and I know Lillian was her mother's only child."

"Lillian's sister is three or four years older than she is, Mr. Trafford," I explained.

He understood now, and said,

"In that case, Mr. Farrar could never seriously have contemplated allowing her to share his property with his lawful child, Miss Haddon. And it is all the more to be regretted that you did

not take me into your confidence at once, Lillian," turning reproachfully toward her. "Such matters are generally, and very properly, left to the management of gentlemen; and the lawyer and I could have spared you being brought into contact with—"

"Papa left it to me to do, Arthur," said Lillian, in a low voice.

"Because he was not at the time capable of judging what was best to be done, and he had no male friend at hand. I can never sufficiently regret happening to be out of the way that night. But you will learn in time to understand the matter rightly. It would be wrong to his wife and child—altogether false sentiment—to talk about doing more than is customary in such cases. Proper provision should, of course, be made; but I entirely set my face against raising a person of that kind above the station to which she doubtless belongs."

"Papa begged me to be good to her, and I must obey his last wishes. A moment, Arthur! It is indeed too late to draw back now. I have already seen my—sister, and have asked her to come to live at Fairview."

"To live! Here—with you? Lillian, have you taken leave of your senses?"

"I have told you—I promised papa to be good to her," repeated Lillian, with a gentle persistence, for which I think he was entirely unprepared.

"Nonsense, Lillian!" he replied, with an angry glance in my direction. "You have been badly advised, I fear. You may be good to the girl without going to such unnecessary lengths as you seem to contemplate doing. Besides, something is surely due to me in the matter. Considering our relation toward each other, I have just grounds for thinking myself very unfairly treated in not being informed of all this before. I ought to have been allowed some voice in the matter."

Had he been any way different from himself, I might have agreed with him; but then Lillian would have acted very differently. Though she knew it not, she had acted as she had done because he was what he was, and not from any other reason. She had intuitively shrunk from telling him until it was too late for interference; and he himself had been to blame for that. And though she was now rather uncomfortably conscious that, in her anxiety to carry out her father's wishes, she had overstepped the limits of prudence, it was not because Arthur Trafford pointed it out to her that she was conscious of it.

"I was so desirous to do what is right," she murmured.

"And that was the best thing you could desire, my dear," cheerily put in Mrs. Tipper. "Never fear but good will come of it; and I really can't see why we shouldn't all be comfortable together."

"A sort of happy family—cats, bats, and owls," angrily ejaculated Arthur Trafford. "I am afraid I should not be found sufficiently tame for such a dove-cot, Mrs. Tipper."

Lillian laid her hand upon his arm, looking with a pained expression into his face.

"Are you really angry with me, Arthur? Do you give me credit for *wishing* to vex you?"

"I am hurt at your want of confidence in me, Lillian. I do not see how you could expect me to be otherwise."

These were better tactics. He saw that they were, and kept up the injured tone. Presently he asked her to go out into the grounds. I believe he fancied that he had now found the way to influence her, and that it only needed to get her away from our vicinity to bring her entirely round to his own way of thinking. He did not know Lillian Farrar.

An hour later she came in, looking more wearied and sad, but not worsted. Moreover, by her absolute silence respecting what had taken place between them, I knew that she had had me as well as herself to defend. But, as I had expected, he had not succeeded in inducing her to alter her plans; and the first shadow of the truth had fallen upon both. They knew that they were each something different from what the other had supposed.

During the intervening ten days, the subject of Marian Reed's expected arrival was touched upon as little as possible between us: though I believe we could none of us think of anything else, we avoided anything like discussion upon it. The only words which passed between Lillian and me on the subject were with reference to the room which was to be prepared for her, and one hesitating remark to the effect that Marian might perhaps prefer the relationship not being made known, since she could only be called Miss Reed.

Arthur Trafford had had time for reflection; and had, I think, come to the conclusion that his wisest course was to make no more objections for the present, but to quietly await the issue. Dear old Mrs. Tipper looked anxious and nervous, though she made one or two attempts to smooth matters, amiably opining that the newcomer might prove an agreeable acquisition to our circle, and so forth. But it was evident that she dreaded the arrival of Marian Reed as much as the rest of us. As to the financial part of the question, she judged that, in her own unconventional fashion, Lillian would be none the less happy for some diminution being made in her large fortune. Her brother had never been quite so happy in affluence as when he was working his way to it; and as to herself, she had more than once confided to me that existence at Fairview was not to be compared to the old times, when she had been busy from morning to night keeping her little cottage home in order. In truth, such society as she had seen at Fairview had no attraction for her; and her sympathies were entirely on the side of a modest competence.

Lillian grew at length so restless and anxious, that for her sake I was quite relieved when the day fixed for Marian Reed to make her appearance among us arrived. Anything was better than the suspense we were all in, or rather I thought so then.

Lillian had received a note from Miss Reed, saying that we might expect her the following morning by the mid-day train, and reminding the former of her promise about sending the carriage. It was written in the orthodox boarding-school, pointed, illegible style, signed "Your Affectionate Sister," and evidently meant to be an elegant specimen of Miss Reed's epistolary powers. It must, I think, have cost her no little trouble to join together so many fine words to convey the intelligence that we might expect her.

Lilian tried hard to overcome the dread, not to say antipathy, she felt; honestly tried, but it was no use: first impressions had been terribly against Marian Reed. The poorest cottager's child seemed a more desirable inmate for Fairview than the elegant Miss Reed. The nervous way with which Lilian reminded me, "You have promised not to forsake me, Mary," when the time at length arrived, would have told me how much she dreaded what was to come, had I not already known. I made no profession—none was needed between us. She understood, and was satisfied with my quiet way now.

We nevertheless found it necessary to clasp hands, and look for a moment into each other's eyes, as a tacit reassurance that, whatever might come to pass, we two were to hold together, when the carriage drew up before the railway-station.

We had no difficulty in recognizing Miss Reed. The young lady in deep mourning, her dress trailing half a yard behind her on the ground, haughtily giving directions to the porter to see to her luggage, was unmistakable.

"And look after the carriage; I expect a carriage is—" She turned and caught sight of us advancing toward her. "Oh, here is my sister! I thought you would be waiting, dear" (kissing Lilian very demonstratively—I was uncharitable enough to suspect, more for the edification of the people standing about the platform than from exuberance of feeling). "Did you come in the carriage?"

"Yes; we drove over."

This, I fancy, suggested the idea of a small chaise to Miss Reed; and she expressed her fear that her boxes "and all that" would be more than we could take. Lilian explained that a luggage-cart was in waiting for that purpose.

"Oh, of course!" And with a negligent air Miss Reed went through the booking-office with us.

But the first sight of "the carriage" was almost too much for her philosophy. She uttered an involuntary ejaculation of astonishment when she saw the baronche with its couple of spirited horses and the men-servants. She, however, very quickly recovered her self-possession, sinking back into her seat with a graceful languor, which seemed to indicate that if she had not gone through the process before, she had watched others doing it. She was quite at ease; and as she proceeded to make talk about the weather, the country we were passing through, and so forth, I saw that Lilian was much less self-possessed than was Marian Reed, gladly leaving me to answer for her.

Much as she desired to do right, it would take Lilian some time yet to feel that this was a sister. Her very anxiety lest she should not be kind and considerate enough made her appear nervous and ill at ease. At the outset Marian Reed had placed us awkwardly by showing that she meant to force the sistership upon every one's notice. I know now that she herself experienced no sort of shame or delicacy respecting the relationship; while Lilian by her very nature felt so much, and could not in the least perceive the true cause of the other's attitude. Indeed, the very self-assertion seemed to Lilian but assumed as a sort of self-defense against people's want of charity in such cases.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER-CURRENTS.

THE first sight of Fairview was a fresh trial to Marian Reed's philosophy: I saw her color rise, and heard her murmur "Good gracious!" as we drove in at the gates and round the sweep to the house. The men-servants were another test of her power of self-command. But, on the whole, it was wonderful how well she contrived to avoid giving expression to her astonishment. Beyond the first hurried ejaculation and a momentary catching-in of the breath now and again, she exhibited no sign of the effect which the Farrar magnificence had upon her.

We turned into the first room we came to, and Lilian bade her sister welcome in her father's name, tenderly and kindly, if a little gravely, hoping that she would feel it was her home.

"Oh yes; I am sure we shall get on together," good-naturedly returned Marian. "What is there to prevent it, you know? I think any one must be hard to please indeed, not to be satisfied here," looking round the room until her eyes met the reflection of themselves in the chimney-glass, where they complacently rested.

I could not but acknowledge that they were good eyes, and that she was altogether what is called a fine girl, with a handsome face, which to an uneducated taste might perhaps be preferable to Lilian's—but, I insisted to myself, only to an unrefined taste. In truth, I was woman enough to admit that much only grudgingly. Though the features were good, they were rather large, and the coloring too vivid; eyes and hair so very black, and complexion so very red and white, made it quite refreshing to me to turn to Lilian's more delicately moulded and tinted loveliness. Marian Reed was tall as well as large, two or three inches taller than Lilian; but the latter was tall enough for grace.

She was attired in the most expensive style of mourning, which was a great deal more befrilled and bepudded than Lilian's plain deep black.

There was a few moments' pause on Lilian's side, and then she nervously began,

"Mary, perhaps Miss Reed would like—"

"Oh, you must not call me 'Miss Reed' now, you know," she interrupted: "sisters ought not to be stiff with each other."

I saw that the "sister" was not to be lost sight of for a moment.

"I was going to say that perhaps you would like to see my aunt at once—before going to your room—Marian."

"Aunt! Have you got an aunt, dear?"

"Yes; my father's sister—my dear aunt lives with me."

"Oh, indeed!" ejaculated Miss Reed, with a somewhat heightened color. She had not calculated upon finding any one besides Lilian. "But," she presently added, as though it had suddenly occurred to her, "if she is your aunt, of course she is mine too."

"Will you come, Marian?"

"Yes, of course I will, dear;" and, with a passing glance at the glass, she followed us to the morning-room.

Mrs. Tipper rose to receive us with her company manner; and I saw she was very much

struck with Marian Reed's appearance. It was a face and figure more attractive to Mrs. Tipper than Lillian's. Much as she thought of the quiet loveliness of Lillian, I saw she was quite dazzled by Marian Reed; and, being dazzled, did not judge with her usual good sense.

"Delighted to see you, I'm sure. Charming morning, is it not? I hope you have had a pleasant drive," and so forth; running through all the polite little speeches which belonged to the genteel phase of her life, and then leaving the other to carry on the talk.

Marian prided herself not a little upon her boarding-school manners; and felt, I think, quite in her element as she gave a few fine speeches in return. Seeing that she could keep it up much longer than could the dear little old lady, and that the latter was growing more and more silent and uncomfortable, I put in a word or two, which brought us all to a level again. I am afraid the means which I took to bring Miss Reed down were a little trying to that young lady. I should not have employed them had any but ourselves been present, or had I been able to think of a better way; but I really could not allow her to begin by making my dear old friend afraid of her, as I saw she very quickly would. So I inquired after Mr. and Mrs. Pratt and the children, hoped business was still flourishing, and so forth, going on to inform Mrs. Tipper that Miss Reed's uncle had a shop in Islington.

Lillian looked not a little surprised at my making such an allusion, and Marian flashed an angry glance from her black eyes toward me. But I saw that this was a young lady who would very soon reign at Fairview if some one did not keep her a little in order; and as there seemed to be no one else to do it, I undertook the task myself. A more refined way of proceeding would not, I felt sure, have had the desired effect with Miss Reed. My little speech made Mrs. Tipper comfortable, to begin with.

"Then you won't mind me, my dear," she said, with a sigh of relief; "I've been accustomed to trade all my life, before brother, in his goodness, brought me to live here; and of course my heart's in it." And straightway she threw off her company manners and became her dear, homely self again, fussing about the new-comer with all sorts of hospitable suggestions. "If you won't take luncheon, say a glass of wine and a biscuit, dear. It is nearly three hours till dinner-time, and you mustn't feel shy with us, you know."

Miss Reed disclaimed feeling in the least degree shy; afraid, I fancy, of not appearing quite equal to the occasion.

"Shy! Oh no, not at all," stiffly.

To help Lillian, who looked timid and shy enough, I suggested that perhaps Miss Reed might like to go to her room, where one of the maids could help her to arrange her wardrobe. She elected so to do; and Lillian and I went with her to the luxurious bedchamber which had been prepared for her. Her eyes turned at once toward the cheval-glass, and I noticed that she was mentally contrasting herself with Lillian, and that the conclusion she arrived at was entirely in her own favor. Then she preferred to be left to see to the unpacking, assuring us that she began to feel quite at home already. Lillian, who had not yet quite recovered her strength, yielded to

my persuasions, and went to her own room to rest until dinner-time.

After dilating upon Marian Reed's evident predilection for examining herself in any glass she happened to be near, it is but right to acknowledge my own weakness that afternoon. On entering my room I walked straight to the dressing-glass, and stood gazing at myself; ay, and with some little favor too! I had been so accustomed to contrast myself with Lillian, that I had come to estimate my own looks at something below their value. In contrast with Marian Reed, my brown eyes and pale face and all the rest of it came quite into favor again, and I told myself Philip might have done worse, after all. Smiling graciously at myself, I now saw quite another face to that which usually greeted me in the dressing-glass, and the more conscious I became of the fact, the pleasanter I found it.

When Becky, who at my request was appointed to attend to my small requirements, presently entered the room, I think she also noticed a change as I made some smiling remark to her over my shoulder.

"How well you do look this afternoon, miss! There! I do wish they could see you now—they couldn't call you 'nothing to look at' now!" she ejaculated, gazing approvingly at me. "Why don't you let your eyes shine like that, as if you was laughing inside, down-stairs?"

"Because I don't often laugh inside, as you term it, down-stairs, I suppose, Becky," I replied, amusedly.

"Then you ought to try to; for it makes you look ever so much prettier," she gravely returned.

"Well, perhaps I ought."

"Of course you ought, miss. I only wish I could make myself prettier, only a smiling. Tom" (Tom was one of the under-gardeners, of late often quoted by Becky) "says it's worse when I smile; though I want bigger eyes, and a straighter nose, and a new skin, and ever so many more things, besides a smaller mouth, before I set up for being good-looking. And they all says I do grin so. I can't help it, because I'm so happy; but of course it must be nicer to look well when you laugh, instead of looking as though your head was only held on by a little bit behind, as they say I do. And I tell them it's all your own hair, though they won't believe even that. Mr. Saunders says it can't be, though you manage to hide where it joins better than some of the ladies. But haven't I watched you doing it up many and many a time?"

I had it in my hands, brushing it out as she spoke, and murmured softly to myself, looking graciously down at it,

"It is long and thick, and a nice color, too, I think."

This was something quite new to Becky, who was in the habit of taking me to task for not making the most of myself. I fancy she thought that I was at last becoming alive to the importance of looking well.

"To be sure it is! I call it lovely—the color of the mahogany chairs. Oh, Miss Haddon, dear, do let me run and fetch some flowers to stick in, like Miss Farrar does, and then they'll see!"

But, to Becky's astonishment, I did not want them to see. My mood had changed; I hasti-

ly put up my hair, and turned away from the glass.

"No; I think I will depend upon the smiling inside, Becky."

"But you are not smiling. Oh, miss, I haven't said anything to vex you, have I?"

"You, Becky!" I turned and kissed the face Tom despised, astounding her still more by the unusual demonstration. "Foolish Becky!" I added, as with a heightened color she bent down and kissed the shawl she was folding up, "to waste a kiss in that improvident fashion!"

"I've often seen you kiss that little locket that hangs to your watch-chain when you thought I wasn't looking," sharply returned Becky.

An idea suddenly suggested itself to me, and I acted upon it without trying to analyze my reason for so doing.

"Would you like to see what is inside that locket, Becky?"

"Yes; that I should, miss! I have wondered about it so." And she added gravely, understanding that it was to be a confidence, "You may trust me never to tell nobody."

"Of course I know that I can trust you, Becky," I said, pressing the spring and disclosing Philip's portrait.

"My! what a nice-looking young gentleman! Who is he?" she asked herself. "I haven't never seen him, have I? Not a young brother?"

"No."

Then, hesitatingly,

"The young man you once walked out with, miss?"

I nodded.

"And—he's dead, isn't he, dear Miss Haddon?"

Involuntarily I uttered a little cry of pain. Why did every one suppose him to be dead?

"No, not dead, Becky."

"Took to walking out with somebody else, and give you up?"

"No; I have not been given up;" my foolish heart sinking. "Cannot you think of something else, Becky?" a little pleadingly.

"Did he do something wrong, miss, and that made you give him up? Though he don't look like that neither," musingly.

I closed the locket, and found that it was time to go down to dinner.

her hands with "menial" work, as I entered the room.

Miss Reed had evidently taken a great deal of pains with her toilet; and I was obliged to acknowledge to myself that she looked very striking, and better in a room than in walking-gear. Moreover, she got through the rather trying ordeal of dining for the first time at a luxurious table much better than might have been expected. She did not suffer from any doubts about herself; and was consequently free from self-consciousness, as well as being quick to note and imitate the ways of others. In conversation she was quite at ease. The consciousness of an acquaintance with Pinnock, French, music, and so forth, and the entire freedom from doubt as to her ability to cope with any question which might arise, imparted an ease and confidence to her tone not usually seen in girls of more perception. Moreover, I could not but acknowledge that she was clever in the way of being quick to seize such ideas as were presented to her. And yet hers was just the kind of cleverness which makes some people shrink from the designation as a reproach—the flippant, shallow sharpness which so grates upon the nerves, so to speak, of the mind. She was the kind of girl who would talk a philosopher mute, and not have the slightest misgivings about the cause of his silence.

Her bearing toward me had undergone a change, which for a while somewhat puzzled me. I was not a little amused when I discovered the cause. Mrs. Tipper had innocently divulged the fact that I was paid for my services at Fairview; and as I had made her a little afraid of me, the relief of finding that I could be displaced at will was great in proportion. She was now loftily condescending toward me, sufficiently marking her sense of the distance between us; though, I think, somewhat at a loss to account for my cheerfulness under it. In truth, I was audacious enough to rather enjoy the fun of the situation, and for the moment did not attempt to hide my amusement.

But when, after dinner, Arthur Trafford made his appearance, the new-comer's attention was very quickly diverted from me. He was waiting for us in the morning-room, and naturally enough curious to see the new-comer; and however great his objection to her coming there, he was gentleman enough to greet her in the right way. Indeed, now that the matter had got beyond his control, he was, I think, desirous to make the *amende* to Lilian for his previous too dictatorial objections. Probably, too, he perceived that he was not likely to carry his point by such means, though he was not hopeless of doing so by another way.

He took great pains to make himself agreeable to Marian Reed; and it was very evident that his little courteous speeches had their full effect. He was doubtless the first gentleman she had conversed with; and I could see that she was a great deal impressed, I think, in ending his deferential and earnest tone with a deeper meaning than he intended them to have.

Lilian looked pleasantly on, accepting his courtesy to Marian as a kindness to herself, after what had taken place. She was very triumphant about it to me afterward, as a proof of his goodness of heart, and so forth. For the present she

CHAPTER XIII.

ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S TACTICS.

I FOUND Marian Reed in the morning-room with Mrs. Tipper, and she had already assumed the *haut-en-bas* tone in talking with the little lady. The latter had innocently thought that the lowliness of their antecedents would be a bond of union between them; but Miss Marian Reed considered that her boarding-school education placed her far above the level of poor people, though she had for a time lived with them. She had not of late associated with her aunt and consins; and she had no sympathy with one like Mrs. Tipper, who was not ashamed to talk about the times when she had lived in a cottage, and done her own washing and scrubbing. She was loftily explaining that she had never soiled

was content to sit apart, thanking him with an occasional glance.

But after a while he appeared to consider that he had done quite sufficient to earn some reward, and drew Lilian out to the garden. Miss Reed was thumping away at the piano, playing a showy school-piece for his delectation; and when she presently looked round, she discovered that her cavalier had disappeared.

"Why, where's—"

"Mr. Trafford is with Lilian in the garden," I explained.

"Oh, is he? Then I will go too," rising as she spoke. "I haven't seen the garden yet."

"I think you must put up with my attendance, Miss Reed. Lovers are privileged to be unso-cialable."

"Lovers!" she ejaculated. "You don't mean to say— He *can't* be her lover!"

"He is, I assure you, Miss Reed. They have been engaged some time, and will be married as soon as circumstances permit."

"I should never have thought—he wasn't a bit like a lover—to her," she said, in a half-an-gry tone, her color more raised than I had yet seen it. In fact, as I suspected, Miss Reed's fancy had been caught; to herself no doubt she termed it falling in love, and she was a young lady of very strong impulses, which were entirely untrained. In their ultra-refinement, Arthur Trafford's good looks were precisely the kind to attract one like Marian Reed; his fashionable, languid air being especially attractive to one who indulged in the kind of literature which is not remarkable for backbone. She curtly declined going into the garden with me, and drew a chair toward one of the windows, where she sat watching the two figures as they passed and repassed in the strip of moonlight outside, her brows lowering and face darkening.

Mrs. Tipper amiably endeavored to do her part toward entertaining her; but Marian Reed was not in the mood to be entertained by Mrs. Tipper, and made it so very evident that she was not, that the little lady became silent and constrained, though, strange to say, I do not think her admiration for the girl decreased in consequence.

Presently Marian went to the piano again, and amused herself trying bits of Lilian's songs, apparently considering neither Mrs. Tipper nor me worth cultivating. But I forced myself upon her notice so far as to tell her that Lilian might consider it to be too soon after her father's death for song-singing. Miss Reed opined that that was all nonsense. There was no necessity for being gloomy, and a little singing and music would rouse her up a little.

The music had certainly a rousing effect, though not in the precise way she imagined; and her singing! Accustomed as I was to Lili-an's sweet voice and pure style, it was almost ex-cruciating to listen to her songs as rendered by the other's loud, untrained voice. I sat down by my dear old friend's side at a distant window, and did my best to make up for Marian Reed's rudeness. But she had not taken offense. As she generally did in such cases, she simply attributed it all to her own want of breeding, and, that being irremediable, accepted the conse-quences without repining. Moreover, she was full of admiration of Marian Reed's good looks.

"Is she not handsome, my dear?" was her lit-tle aside to me. "And seems so accomplished, too." (One "tune," as she termed it, was quite as good as another, from an artistic point of view, to Mrs. Tipper.) "Such a good thing for Lili-an that Miss Reed has been educated like a lady, is it not? To tell the truth, I was rather afraid she might turn out to be a common person like me, you know. At her age I should never have done for Fairview, not even so well as I do now. Knowing the piano and French does make such a difference, doesn't it?"

I could but raise the hand I held to my lips, dissenting so entirely as I did from the notion of Marian Reed's superiority. And I believed that Mrs. Tipper herself was only dazzled for a time; her perception was too true to be blinded for very long.

When the lovers re-entered, I saw that they were regarded by Marian with a new and uneasy curiosity.

In our *tête-à-tête* that night, Lilian could talk of nothing but her lover's goodness and readiness to fall in with her scheme for Marian's welfare. "Dear Arthur, he made no objections now. He had only objected at first, because he felt a little hurt, as it was quite natural he should, at not being consulted. But everything would be well now."

I listened in some little surprise to this sudden change in his tactics, until Lilian unconsciously gave me the key.

"Arthur is quite willing now. She is to be always free to live at Fairview as long as she is inclined, and have five hundred a year, as I wish her to have. But he says there is no necessity for legal arrangements, as though we could not trust each other, you know."

Had I considered Marian Reed's claims to be as great as Lilian considered them to be, I might have tried my influence against Arthur Trafford's in the matter. As it was, I urged no objection to his arrangement, though I quite understood its import. It would, of course, be quite possi-ble for Lilian's husband so to contrive matters that Marian Reed would not be long inclined to live at Fairview; and as to the five hundred a year! well, I believed it would do no real harm to her if she were by-and-by reduced to two hun-dred and her former sphere again. Hers was not the nature to improve in consequence of having more power in her hands, and a sister or com-panion for Lilian she never would be. It was too late in the day for any radical change in her tastes and habits. They were travelling different roads, and the longer they lived, the farther they would be apart.

Lilian's sentiments, as days passed by, were not difficult to fathom. Her very anxiety to make the most of anything in favor of the girl her whole soul shrunk from, spoke volumes to me. Indeed, she had no little difficulty in combating the repulsion which it shocked her to feel toward her father's child.

Marian did not miss anything or suffer, as the other would have done in her place. She never perceived the underlying cause of Lilian's anxie-ty to please and conciliate her. It was not in her nature to see that Lilian was, so to speak, always pleading for forgiveness for the wrong done to Marian's mother, and trying to expiate her father's fault. Then, conscious as she was

of shrinking from the coarser mind, which was being day by day unfolded to us, poor Lilian was terribly afraid lest it should be apparent to the other; not perceiving that the very fact of its being coarse rendered it the more impervious. In truth, self-assertion and *hauteur* would have won a great deal more respect from Marian than did the too evident desire to please. She was beginning almost to look down upon the girl she could not understand, conscious how different she herself would be were she in Lilian's place and Lilian in hers, and was without any misgivings as to her own superiority. She was also beginning to assume a great deal, and I was the only one to do battle with her, though I had some difficulty in keeping her within due bounds now. As it may be supposed, I did not gain favor with her. There was the difference that she liked Lilian and looked down upon her; while she disliked me and was a little afraid of me.

Mrs. Chichester made great and palpable efforts to act against her judgment in noticing Miss Reed—"for dear Lilian's sake," as she confided to Robert Wentworth and me. "It was the only thing to be done now. Of course, she could not but regret that dear Lilian should not have asked the advice of some judicious friend in the matter. No one could doubt its being a mistake to bring Miss Reed to Fairview; now, did not Mr. Wentworth think so?"

"Yes; Mr. Wentworth did think so."

"And what did dear Miss Haddon think?"

Miss Haddon had advised Lilian to follow her instincts in the matter.

"But pray excuse me; do not you think that is rather dangerous advice to give—to some persons?"

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Chichester."

At which Mrs. Chichester was in a flutter of consternation, lest I should for one moment imagine that she had meant to be unkind in leading me on to make such an admission of fallibility, and prettily begged Mr. Wentworth to give his assistance to enable her to obtain my forgiveness.

It took their united powers of persuasion, and gave Mrs. Chichester opportunities for all sorts of pretty amiables, before Miss Haddon could be brought to reason; and then the former had to be satisfied with what she termed "a very slight unbending of the stern brow," as an acknowledgment of my defeat.

Then how pleasant and amiable it was to take all the trouble she did to put me in a good humor with myself again by pointing out that the very wisest of us may sometimes err in our judgment, and so forth! Matters were progressing thus agreeably, when Lilian wanted Mrs. Chichester's advice about the arrangement of some ferns in the conservatory, and I was left for a few moments alone with Robert Wentworth.

"Lilian did not obey her instincts in inviting this Miss Reed to come to reside with her, Miss Haddon."

I smiled.

"And believing that, you allowed the stigma of being an injudicious friend to be attached to me."

"Because I saw you so willed it; and I do not waste my powers of oratory when they are not required."

Then, abruptly changing the subject—there

was none of the suavity and consideration which Mrs. Chichester considered to be so essential to friendship between him and me—he went on,

"Tell me what you think of this Miss Reed. Is she what she appears to be?"

"What does she appear to you?"

"Well, I suppose we could not expect her to be quite a gentlewoman; but really—Your little Becky is a great deal nearer the mark, according to my standard."

"Yes, I think she is."

"And time will do nothing for her—not the slightest hope of it! She would never be a companion for Lilian, if they lived together a hundred years—of course you see that."

For Lilian! How plainly he was always showing that she was the centre to which all his thoughts converged!

"Yes; I see that they will never be companions; but Miss Reed will miss nothing; she will do no harm to Lilian."

"Not in one way, perhaps."

"Not in any way, Mr. Wentworth, other than paining her sometimes."

"But if that might have been avoided?"

"Neither sorrow nor pain, nor any other thing, will injure Lilian in the long-run. You ought to know that."

"I am not an advocate for enduring unnecessary pain, Miss Haddon."

"I believe Lilian will have to suffer—it may be a great deal—and some preliminary training will enable her to bear what is to come all the easier."

"I am afraid Mrs. Chichester is right, after all, in considering you to be a little hard, Miss Haddon."

"Afraid Mrs. Chichester is right! I have a great mind to tell her!" I ejaculated, rising.

"Have a greater mind, and don't," he smilingly returned.

"But it might be good for you to go into training a little, as well as the rest of us; and Mrs. Chichester might not object to undertake—"

"Could not you try what you could do toward bringing me into a better frame of mind?" he said. "It would be like an acknowledgment of weakness to hand me over to Mrs. Chichester, you know. You might, at any rate, try what could be done for me before acknowledging yourself unequal to the task in that faint-hearted way."

"In other words, you want me to stay and talk Lilian to you," was my mental comment, as I shook my head and moved away.

As I have said, I liked Robert Wentworth better than any other gentleman who came to Fairview. Arthur Trafford occasionally brought a friend with him down to dinner; but his friends were not of the pattern which pleased me—men who looked, and spoke, and moved as though they were only playing the part of supernumeraries on the stage of life. With Robert Wentworth there was all the pleasure of feeling that I was thoroughly understood. I was, indeed, able to unfold my thoughts to him, as I could not even to Lilian, love her as I did. She was a girl, and I a woman, and she deferred to me as to an elder sister; constantly, though unconsciously, reminding me of the eleven years' difference between our ages.

Robert Wentworth and I met on equal terms.

With him I neither gave nor obtained quarter; and our encounters were as refreshing as a tonic to my mental health. Whatever the subject broached, we freely showed each other our thoughts about it; and I learned to give and take a blow with perfect good-humor. I was sometimes not a little startled to find how completely he was beginning to track out certain tendencies, which I had hitherto flattered myself were so safely packed away out of sight as to be unknown to those with whom I associated. More than once the common-sense which he bantered me about setting too high a value upon was blinded, and I was led on by wily steps into the enchanted regions of romance, and, penetrated by their subtle influence, gave words to my thoughts before I recollected and was on guard again. But no word or look of Robert Wentworth's wounded my *amour propre* at such times; my little flights of fancy met with the gravest respect. In truth, he was a great deal more tolerant to what he termed my romance than to any little slip in my reasoning; because he had the candor to tell me my ideality was getting starved for want of nourishment, and needed a little encouragement, while my reasoning powers required an occasional snubbing. "And as to pretending you have no romance—you are the most romantic young lady I know. Don't protest; it would not be the least use, though I will not expose you to the world—not even to Lillian."

I only knew that he was gradually teaching me to be less ashamed of such things than I had latterly been, and so rendering me less morbid and more fit to be Philip's wife. Philip should thank him for that as well as other things by-and-by. The hope that Philip and he would be friends, and that there would be pleasant communion between us three in the future, was very cheering to me. How complete would have been the picture, could I have imagined Lillian in it as the wife of Robert Wentworth!

Meantime, everything was flowing smoothly on with the lovers again. I think that I was the only one at Fairview to note the change which was taking place in Marian Reed. She had never been accustomed to exercise self-control, and was yielding more and more to an infatuation which was making her life miserable.

She loved Arthur Trafford, as such natures do love, with a wild, ungovernable, selfish passion, and with unreasoning anger altogether refused to accept the existing state of things. She would not accept happiness in any way but one, and moodily dwelt upon what she encouraged herself to believe were her wrongs. Why should she be without a name, dependent upon others' bounty, and denied the love she craved, while Lillian possessed everything? It was easy enough to be amiable when you had all you wanted! But she did not covet all—only love, and that was denied her. All this she showed me in more ways than one, which roused my suspicion that she was doing what she could to attract Arthur Trafford, and would have felt no compunction in winning his love from Lillian, had that been possible. There were occasions when it was almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that she was trying to outvie Lillian in the only way she knew how to outvie a rival. I knew that she must be spending a great deal more than was right or necessary upon dress, so con-

stant were the changes she made, availing herself of everything which is invented in the way of ornament by fashionable milliners for fashionable woe, while her large, handsome white shoulders were thrust upon our notice a great deal more than was in good taste. And as to her conversation, partly loud and self-asserting, partly sentimental, accompanied with languishing glances at her hero from the great black eyes—But I must not go on. I am afraid I was not inclined to allow her a single good quality just at this time, and therefore my judgment must, I suppose, be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, allowing for hidden good qualities, which I had not given her credit for possessing, she really was not pleasant as a companion just now.

Much as dear old Mrs. Tipper admired her personally, even she was obliged to acknowledge that Miss Reed was not quite so amiable and easy to get on with as could be desired. Indeed, more than once had I found it necessary to protect the kind little lady from the ill-humor of Marian, and the sharp way with which I was immediately retorted upon did not greatly discomfit me. It was enough that I had the power to keep her within due bounds toward others.

I think it was specially obnoxious to her to find that I was observant of her demeanor toward Arthur Trafford, and made a point of putting in an appearance when she happened to be *tête-à-tête* with him. I was gravely displeased, as time went on, to find that he not only suspected the state of Marian Reed's feelings toward him, but amused himself by making it more apparent, feeding her vanity with all sorts of exaggerated compliments, accompanied by languishing glances.

Was this conduct worthy of Lillian's affianced husband? I knew that he did not in reality even admire Marian's style of good looks, and was only amused by her too evident predilection for him. But what was he, to find amusement thus? I asked myself, indignant for Lillian's sake.

"You are very uncomplimentary to Miss Reed, I think, Mr. Trafford," I said one day, when I had been the witness of a scene bordering upon flirtation between them, and could no longer keep silence. Lillian was in the garden with her aunt when he arrived, and Marian Reed had found it out of her power to get rid of me, though she had not scrupled to let me see that my company was not desired. Arthur Trafford's flattery had been rather more marked than usual, and I lost all patience.

"Uncomplimentary!" she ejaculated, looking very much astonished.

Had he not been telling her that she had displayed more than usual taste in her toilet, and was looking dreadfully killing to-night?

"I meant uncomplimentary to your sense, Miss Reed."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I think Mr. Trafford does."

He flushed up, giving me an angry glance. She answered for him.

"I am sure Mr. Trafford did not mean to be uncomplimentary in any way," with a little defiant toss of the head and glance toward him.

Of course he could only protest that he did not, and she was perfectly satisfied. He evidently knew better than I did the kind of compliments

which would be most acceptable to her. Indeed, I suppose she would not have considered them to be flattery at all, but simply the truth, which there was no harm in his telling her.

"She likes that sort of thing," he said, with a little awkward laugh, when presently he and I were for a few moments alone together. "And I don't see that there can be much harm in saying a few complimentary words to a girl, if it gratifies her, Miss Haddon."

"Well, I am glad that you do not *gratify* her in Lillian's presence, Mr. Trafford; she would perceive what Miss Reed apparently does not."

He reddened again.

"Lillian is so essentially and entirely different in every way. You can hardly expect the same kind of refinement in the other."

"I suppose not; but I cannot see that that is a reason for treating them both with disrespect. It is quite as ill a compliment to Lillian as to Miss Reed to flatter the latter's vanity as you do."

"I don't see any ill compliment in telling a good-looking girl that she is so, if she likes to be told it," he repeated. "No one can deny that she is a fine girl, in her way."

"I suppose she is; but I admire Lillian too much to be enthusiastic about Miss Reed's style of beauty, Mr. Trafford."

He was getting more decidedly out of temper, muttering something about some women being so hard upon their own sex, as he turned away.

I had done no good by my interference, only caused them to be a little more guarded in my presence, and perhaps dislike me more. But Marian Reed no longer made any effort to conceal the restless discontent which devoured her. Not for a moment suspecting the cause, Lillian was greatly puzzled to account for the other's increasing discontent, and redoubled her efforts to please, though she was only snubbed for her pains.

"Do you think that I leave anything undone, Mary?" she would anxiously ask me, when she and I were alone. "Or do you think that Marian's feelings are really deeper than we at first imagined them to be, about—the wrong done to her mother, and that all this luxury jars upon her?" After waiting a moment for an answer, which came not (how could I express my belief as to the real cause of Marian's discomfort?) she went on: "But you know how much I try to spare her, Mary; you know that I would not for the world do anything to remind her of the shame. Do I not share it?"

Yes, I did know. But I could only kiss the sweet brow, and murmur some platitude about hoping that things would right themselves in time. I would not attempt to inculcate any of the worldly wisdom which it had cost me my youth to obtain. Rather was I inclined to encourage her pure faith and trust in others, her ignorance of evil, as long as possible. The pain which comes with one kind of knowledge I would spare her as long as possible. For the present, it did her no harm to believe a little too much in others; at least, so I told myself.

Lillian! whatever others might think, I knew that your gentleness and forbearance did not proceed from weakness. When the time of trial came, they would see! It was nearer than I imagined it to be, and came in a different and

far more serious form than my gravest fears had foreshadowed. It was nearly six months after Mr. Farrar's death, and there was beginning to be some talk of preparing for the wedding, which was to take place in two months, Lillian having yielded to her lover's importunities the more readily from the knowledge that she was obeying her father's wishes, when, like a sudden thunder-clap, the shock came.

CHAPTER XIV.

A REVELATION.

I WAS saying a few words to the house-keeper, when one of the maids came running in to tell me that Miss Farrar wanted me in the green room immediately.

"I am afraid Miss Farrar is taken suddenly ill, or something serious has happened, miss; for she could hardly speak, and told me to beg you not to delay a moment."

Lillian ill! I hastened up-stairs as fast as my feet would carry me. It was the room in which her father had died, and it had been shut up ever since. I had advised her to have it opened and the furniture changed, in order to destroy painful associations, and she had at length yielded to persuasions. But we decided that she and I were first to give a last look through the cabinet before it was removed, she having resolved to keep that one memento of her father in her own room. She had gone on, and I was only waiting to give some instructions to the house-keeper before following her.

I found her standing near the cabinet, which was open, with her eyes fixed upon a paper she held in her hand, and looking as though she had been suddenly turned to stone. Quietly and quickly closing the door, and turning the key in the lock, I went toward her.

"What is it, Lillian?"

Without a word, she put the paper into my hands, then knelt down before her father's chair, burying her face in her hands. I knelt down beside her, and, passing my arm round her waist, turned my eyes upon the paper.

I was in a measure prepared for some kind of calamity. But this! I read the lines slowly through a second time:

"I, JACOB FARRAR, take LUCY REED as my lawful wife, on this twelfth day of January, 1839, at this place, Dunkeld, Perthshire, in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

"DONALD GREY, *Shepherd.*

"PETER FORBES, *Hostler.*"

The date I knew to be three years previous to Mr. Farrar's marriage with Lillian's mother; and with that knowledge something else broke upon me. I myself had left that paper in the recess of the cabinet from which I had taken the letters and little packet. I could even recollect having had a moment's hesitation as to whether I should take it or not, when I lifted the papers which lay upon it; but it looked so insignificant, merely like a piece of blank paper folded together, that I let it remain. From the moment my eyes fell upon its contents I recognized that it was of vital importance to Lillian. Not a moment's doubt

as to its genuineness entered my head. Mr. Farrar's anxiety to have those papers destroyed was too vividly impressed upon my mind.

But my fear of what that paper might import, and my love for Lilian notwithstanding, I strongly resented his having endeavored to make me an instrument to destroy it.

"Help me, Mary!"

Imagining that she was speaking in grief, instead of joy, I offered up a mental prayer for strength to help her in the right way, then drew her head on to my shoulder.

"I will, Lilian."

"You think it is true?" she whispered, clinging to me.

As it happened, we had been lately reading about a much-talked-of will case, in which a great deal depended upon the claimant being able to prove a Scotch marriage; and both Lilian and I had taken peculiar interest in the question to read up the evidence. We were therefore the more startled by the discovery of the paper, and more ready to believe in its genuineness than we might otherwise have been.

"I think there may be some possibility that it is genuine, Lilian," I hesitatingly replied; grieved as I was to say it, giving her my real opinion.

"Ah, Mary, be glad with me!" she ejaculated, to my intense surprise, for I still did not perceive what was in her mind. "How could his child have doubted him?" She rose exultant, adding, with glowing cheeks and brilliant eyes, "Can I ever be thankful enough for his sake? No more shame for me! Be glad with me, Mary!"

"I will, dear," I returned, still a little bewildered at her joy, "when—when I am quite sure there are good grounds for being glad."

"Grounds? Do not you think it is genuine?" she asked, eagerly. "Look at the dates—and names too."

"Yes; I think—perhaps it may prove so. The signatures are in different handwritings: it certainly looks like a genuine document," I said, stupidly; "but—"

"There must be no 'buts'! Don't you see, dear slow darling that you are, this proves papa to have been an honorable gentleman, and takes the shame of his wrong-doing from his child? Was not my shame greater than hers, if he had wronged her mother?"

I saw now. But I saw, too, that another thing of terrible import to herself had not occurred to her. After a few moments' reflection, I said, "Will you wait here five minutes for me, Lilian? I must send off a letter I have written, to save the next post; but I will be back in five minutes." I really had a letter to send—an order to a London tradesman, which the house-keeper wished to be attended to; but I should not have thought of it at that moment, had I not been seeking about in my mind for an excuse for leaving her a short time.

She looked not a little surprised, but replied,

"Of course I will wait, if you wish it, Mary."

"Promise me, Lilian—promise me that you will not leave this room until I return."

She gravely promised; and I hastened from the room and down stairs, my pulse throbbing tumultuously. Hurriedly throwing the letter on to the hall table, I turned into the morning-

room, where Marian Reed was practising a new song. I was so far fortunate as to find her too much occupied to notice my agitation, which must, I think, have been very evident in my face. I found it difficult enough to command my thoughts, much more the expression of my face. She did not notice my entrance into the room, and that gave me a few moments to gather courage and decide how I could best lead up to the subject I wanted to introduce. I could think of no better way than putting a direct question. Catching up a piece of Lilian's dainty embroidery, which lay in her work-basket, and putting in a few random stitches, in the hope that it might appear as if the idea had suddenly occurred to me while I sat working, I asked,

"I suppose you have no recollection of your mother, Miss Reed? Had she dark hair and eyes like your own—have you heard?"

"Ma? Oh yes; I recollect ma perfectly well, Miss Haddon. Her eyes were just a shade lighter than—"

"Some people have such wonderful memories. I have heard of people recollecting things which occurred when they were quite babies," I put in, trying to speak lightly, as I dragged the needle through and through, to the utter destruction of Lilian's delicate work.

"But I wasn't a baby when ma died, you know."

"About two years old, I suppose?"

"No; I was over five when ma died, Miss Haddon."

"You must be mistaken, I think. I recollect your aunt saying that you were quite young—almost a baby," I returned, bringing the words out slowly and heavily.

"Well, five is almost a baby, isn't it?" turning on the music-stool to look at me.

"But I think you must be mistaken in fancying you were as old as five. You could not have been much over two years and a half, or three—perhaps three," I pleaded. If what I feared was true, was I not pleading for the good name of Lilian's mother?

"Well, I do think I ought to be allowed to know best about that, Miss Haddon. I am over twenty, and ma has been dead fifteen years." Then she added, with what was meant for satire: "But if I can't be believed about it, there's the register of my birth and ma's death to be found, I suppose; and it may not be *all* stories on her tombstone, which, I must say, pa spared no expense about. It's in the church-yard at Highgate, where ma was staying for change of air when she died, if you would like to go and see it."

I folded the spoiled work carefully together, methodically replacing it in the basket, first square, then corner-wise, as I tried to gather up my scattered wits and prepare my face for Lilian's eyes again. Fortunately, Marian Reed flattered herself that she had for once succeeded in putting Mary Haddon down, and was in spirits accordingly, singing away at the top of her voice again.

I quitted the room, and slowly made my way to the green chamber, where Lilian was waiting for me.

"Well, Mary!" she ejaculated, turning a smiling, happy face toward me as I entered, "have you come to set your prisoner free, madam?"

"Yes," I replied, stupidly gazing at her.

"What makes you look at me like that, Mary?"

"How do I look?" I replied, with an attempt at a smile.

But her fears were aroused. "Is it anything about this?" she anxiously asked, looking down at the paper in her hand, and then into my face.

"I—I have been thinking the matter over, Lilian, and—I should like to ask some one's advice."

"Some one's advice? About this, dear?" turning it over in her hand, and then giving a wondering look at me.

"I mean as to its genuineness, Lilian."

"I do not understand. These names are plain enough, and you thought just now—"

"Oh, any one might have written these names without the document being a binding one," I said, catching at any hope. "To be legal, it must have been signed in Scotland, you know; and there is no proof that it was."

"But you hope—Mary, do not you *hope* that it is genuine?"

"I do not quite know what to hope, dearie," I replied, with a would-be careless air.

In her utter unconsciousness of the cause of my uneasiness, she could not account for my want of sympathy, looking at me in some surprise. Then, after a few moments' silence, she said, in a low, grave voice, "I know what to hope, Mary. I heartily hope that Marian's mother may have been righted."

Not once did it occur to her that it might be at the expense of her own mother. How she would act when the whole truth broke upon her remained to be seen. I could not tell her while there seemed a thread of hope to cling to; and I tried to persuade myself that my fears as to the genuineness of that paper might yet prove to have been groundless.

"I think the best plan will be for me to write to Mr. Wentworth, and ask him to advise and assist us, Lilian. He will be able to ascertain whether this is a *bonâ fide* document, and represents a real marriage or not. And until that is done, I strongly advise you to say nothing about having found the paper."

"Dear Mary, do you think there is so much necessity for secrecy about it?"

"I do indeed, Lilian." Then, seeing that she still demurred (it seemed to her only natural and right at once to make known the discovery of the paper, be the consequences what they might), I added, diplomatically, "I think it would be wiser not to raise Marian's hopes until you are quite sure they will not be disappointed. It is a case in which disappointment might be very terrible for her."

"Yes, of course it would; I did not think of that. You are quite right, dear cautious old darling that you are; and I will obey you, though I do not myself fear disappointment."

"Then it is understood that for the present it is to go no farther; and I will at once write to Mr. Wentworth, enclosing him a copy of this;" taking the paper from her reluctant fingers.

"You will be very careful of it, Mary? Recollect how much depends—"

"Oh yes, it will be safe enough," I hurriedly replied, only anxious to make my escape before she could change her mind.

Once in my room, with that paper in my own possession, I very quickly had my nerves under command, and was ready for business, sitting down to write my letter with a clear head and firm hand:

"MY DEAR MR. WENTWORTH, — In looking through a cabinet of her father's, Lilian just now found the original of the paper which I have copied, and enclose. She sees in it only the vindication of Marian's mother, and rejoices accordingly. Unknown to Lilian, I have questioned Marian as to her age when her mother died. She insists that she was over five years old, and that her mother has been dead only fifteen years. If this be so, and this document is genuine, it is not *Marian's* mother who has been wronged; and the former will be righted at the expense of our Lilian. You and I know that right will be done, be the cost what it may to her. I need not say on which side my sympathies are. I have not much hope, but hasten to send the paper for your consideration, and beg you to act for her. Please go first to Marian's aunt, Mrs. Pratt, Green Street, Islington; and make sure about the dates of Marian's birth and her mother's death before you take measures to prove the validity of the marriage. I do not apologize for asking this of you. To do our best for Lilian is a real privilege to you and me, and I know that it is not necessary to beg you to lose no time."

A telegram was handed to me that night at tea-time: "ROBERT WENTWORTH to Miss HADDON, — *Letter received, and I am at work.*" I showed it to Lilian, who returned it to me with a nod and smile.

Dear old Mrs. Tipper looked somewhat surprised, and Marian curious; but surprised and curious they had to remain. Meantime the suspense was terrible to me; I was so restless and unlike my ordinary self, that I could do nothing even in the way of occupying only my fingers. In my discomfort I was impolitic enough to offend Marian Reed as I had not yet done. The very sight of her irritated me, and her imperfections seemed more glaring than ever. I think I should have grudged allowing her credit for having a single good quality. A very slight event brought my indignation to a climax.

"That is Lilian's box," I sharply exclaimed, as she turned the key in a little Indian box on one of the tables, and was turning over the contents.

"I want some more of that purse-silk she gave me yesterday to finish this chain with," she carelessly replied, as she continued her search roughly, or it seemed roughly to me in the frame of mind I was just then, turning over Lilian's dainty little belongings. I was rude enough to take the box from beneath her hands, and lock it and take the key out. I am ashamed to say that I was even conscious of feeling some little gratification at arousing her anger.

"Well, I never! That's a polite thing to do!" she angrily ejaculated.

It was a very foolish thing to do; and, on reflection, I knew that it was; but for a moment it was very pleasant, and I persuaded myself that it was almost necessary as a safety-valve to my spleen—to prevent a more decided exhibition of my feelings.

When presently Lilian entered the room, Marian inquired in an injured tone why she was not permitted to take a little more of the silk which had been so freely given yesterday.

Lilian looked surprised. "There is not the slightest reason why you should not," she replied, unconsciously, taking the box up from where I had placed it, and begging Marian to help herself.

"Thank you, dear. I knew you would not be ill-natured," said Marian, with a toss of the head and triumphant glance toward me, as she placed the box upon her lap and recommenced rummaging.

I was rightly punished for my little display of temper, although I was aware that Marian would not consider my punishment sufficient. It was an offense which might be looked over for the time, but not forgotten as a thing forgiven. However, as Robert Wentworth affirms, it may be just as well that I should be occasionally taken down a little; and my lesson did me some service in the way of making me more careful for the future.

CHAPTER XV.

ROBERT WENTWORTH'S NEWS.

"Do you really think that I ought not to tell Arthur yet, Mary?" whispered Lilian to me later in the day, when she was about to accompany her lover into the garden.

"I should certainly advise you not to do so until we know whether or not the discovery is of any importance," I replied, in the same tone.

"I would so much prefer telling him," she murmured, anxiously.

"I can understand that, dear Lilian."

"And still you think it best not to tell him?"

"I am only afraid that he might not hold the same views as you do yourself upon the point; and it would only lead to painful discussion, which it is as well to avoid, at any rate, until you know for certain whether the document is genuine or not."

Her respect for my opinion proved to be stronger than her respect for his—perhaps because I tried to appeal to her reason as well as to her feelings—and she did not tell him.

The next day passed, and the next, slowly enough to me, in the miserable state of uncertainty I was in, no sign being made by Robert Wentworth. But when another day went by, and then another, the truth began to dawn upon me. He had gone to Scotland to make inquiries on the spot, which proved that what he had learned from Mrs. Pratt rendered it necessary so to do; and that everything now depended upon the validity of Mr. Farrar's marriage with Marian's mother. Then I saw that it was not right to allow Lilian to go on without some sort of preparation for the blow, which might fall at any moment. It was now my duty to prepare her in some degree for what she evidently had not the slightest suspicion of. If Robert Wentworth's inquiries had brought out the fact that Marian's mother died before Lilian's was married to Mr. Farrar, there would not have been the slightest necessity for the journey to Scotland; and his setting forth without delay showed me that he had grave grounds for believing the document to

be a legal one. It was evident that everything now depended upon the legality of that marriage.

"Well, Mary, what is it? news—good news?" asked Lilian, as she entered my room. I had sent a message begging her to come to me after dinner, knowing we should be secure from intrusion there.

"Dear Lilian, what would you consider to be good news?"

"The legality of the marriage being proved, of course," she answered, promptly.

"I have no news, dear Lilian; but—I want to talk the matter over with you a little. I am beginning to get very anxious about not hearing from Mr. Wentworth. He must have seen the necessity for going to Scotland; and if the marriage is proved to be a *bonâ fide* one, I fear—"

"What do you fear, Mary?"

"Dear Lilian, I foresee something which it is extremely painful to think of—something which has not, I think, occurred to you."

"What is that?" she asked, wonderingly.

"I do not like to even suggest it, because all may yet be well. Still it is my duty to warn you that there may be a consequence which you have not anticipated with reference to the—"

Some one was tapping at the door, which I had locked, and on opening it I saw Becky.

"Mr. Wentworth had just come, and he wishes to see you by yourself, please, miss."

"Where is he, Becky?"

"In the drawing-room, miss; and I'll see that nobody shall disturb you," mysteriously whispered Becky, who had, I suppose, received a hint from him that he desired to see me privately.

"Say that I will come immediately," adding to Lilian, as I hurriedly made my way toward the door again, "Will you wait for me here a few minutes, Lilian?"

But I had said enough to arouse her fears, though she was still in ignorance as to the cause, and she gravely replied,

"No, Mary; I will go with you. I know now that you are trying to spare me in some way—oh, Mary, why do you look at me like that?—I will go with you and hear the worst."

Well I knew that he would be as careful in telling her as I could be. And if there was indeed bad news, I should be very glad of his assistance in breaking it to her. We went down together, and one glance at his face, as we entered the room, warned me to expect the worst. His grave words,

"I wished to see you alone for a few moments, Miss Haddon," confirmed my fears.

"I wished to come—I would come, Mr. Wentworth," said Lilian, slipping her hand into mine; "and you must please to let me stay, if what you have to say concerns me. You have come to tell us what you have ascertained about the paper I found, have you not?"

I put my arm round her, with a look toward him. She looked from one to the other of us in some surprise.

"Yes," he hesitatingly replied; "I have been to Scotland."

"Then why do you look at me like that? Why are you both so strange? Mary, you ought to know there is nothing I should be more rejoiced to hear than that the marriage was a legal one."

"It is not that, Lillian. I have guessed aright; you have been proving the genuineness of the marriage during your absence, have you not, Mr. Wentworth?" I asked.

"I grieve to say that there was no difficulty in proving it, Miss Haddon."

"Grieve! grieve! when it proves papa to have acted like an honorable gentleman, instead of—Oh, Mary, you too!" turning from him to me, with a wounded look.

He saw now that the one thing had not yet occurred to her, and turned silently away. He could not strike the blow.

I drew her to a couch by my side, and said, with faltering lips,

"I fear that it has not occurred to you that, though it might be better for Marian that her mother's marriage should be proved, it would be worse for you."

"Worse for me? Is it possible that you can for one moment be thinking about the money? Can you suppose that my father's good name is not more to me than such—"

"Dear Lillian, I was not thinking about the money," I slowly replied, with a miserable sickening of the heart as I suddenly realized that the property also was lost. She would be penniless as well as nameless. I glanced toward him again. No, there was no hope!

"Then how can it be worse for me? How can it possibly be worse for me that papa did right instead of wrong? Please tell me at once what you mean."

Alas! the more she dwelt upon the honor, the more she was showing us how terribly she would feel the dishonor. My eyes appealed once more to him for help.

But he gravely said,

"Miss Haddon knows what there is to tell, and it will come best from her."

So it was left to me. I, who loved her most, had to strike the blow. I only put one last question to him:

"Is what I most feared realized, Mr. Wentworth?"

He bowed his head in assent, and walked toward the window as I went on,

"Lillian, dear sister—you promised to let me call you that—there *is* something to be suffered; and though I know you will bear it more bravely than many would, it will be very hard to bear. In your anxiety to do justice to Marian, you did not perceive that—it might bring suffering upon yourself."

"Doing justice need not bring suffering, Mary."

"It sometimes may, Lillian. The reward of right-doing is not always reaped at the moment."

"You are not talking like yourself, Mary. What do you and I care about getting rewards? Please tell me at once what I have to bear. I know now that it is something bad; and I know that you are both very sorry for me."

"The bad news is the date of Marian's mother's death, Lillian. She died when you were about two years old."

She saw, rose to her feet, and stood for a moment with her hands extended, as though to ward off a blow, and then fell back into my arms.

"Lock the door, please, and help me. She must not be seen by others in her weakness," I

said, placing her among the pillows. "She will soon be herself again."

Then I bade him throw open the windows, while I gently fanned her.

In a few moments she opened her eyes, and struggled to her feet.

"Was it a dream—was it?" she ejaculated, looking eagerly into my face. "Ah, no!"

She was powerless again for a few moments. But she was gaining strength, and presently insisted upon hearing the whole truth from Robert Wentworth's own lips.

He saw that it would be more merciful to comply now, and did so unreservedly. He had been too much interested to leave a stone unturned, although every step he took more plainly revealed what it was so painful to discover. He had taken counsel's advice upon it, and his own judgment was confirmed: Mr. Farrar's marriage with Marian's mother was a legal one, and Lillian's mother had been no wife in the eye of the law.

I may as well state here that Mr. Farrar received the paper with his letters to Lucy Reed from Mrs. Pratt, after her sister's death, just as they had been found. I thought that it was not at all probable Marian's mother had ever realized her position, or she would have taken steps to secure it. Most probably Mr. Farrar persuaded her that the document was in some way informal. There is just the possibility that he did not believe in it himself, and had gone through the ceremony to satisfy Lucy Reed while she was with him during a tour in Scotland.

Why he did not at once destroy the evidence against himself when it came into his possession, since he never could have meant to acknowledge the marriage, is difficult to understand in a man of Mr. Farrar's cautious, business-like habits—as puzzling as a murderer keeping the evidence of his crime about him. We only know that such things are not uncommon. It might have been that Mr. Farrar kept the paper to remind him of Marian's claims upon him, though he never meant them to interfere with Lillian's. The latter's mother was a gentlewoman, young and beautiful. He had gratified both love and ambition in marrying her; and after her death his love for her child engrossed his whole being. After a few moments' reflection, I said,

"They will be looking after us presently, Lillian. Would you like Mr. Wentworth to explain to Mr. Trafford?"

"Yes," she whispered, her trembling hands clinging closer about me. Then, loyal and true to him, she added, "But remember that I do him the justice to say that the loss of the—Only my shame will trouble him. He has so often wished I had not a penny."

I could only gather her to my heart, with a look toward him.

His was the hardest task, after all! He and I knew that now. He left us alone, and my Lillian and I tried to find strength for what was to come, as only such strength can be found. But Lillian would never be the same again. Her love to her father had been wounded unto death. And I saw that it was her mother—her cruelly wronged mother—who had all her sympathy now. I shall never forget the agony expressed in the whispered words, "Mother! mother!"

We were not left very long alone. Robert Wentworth could barely have had time to tell

the story, when Arthur Trafford came striding in by the open window.

"Good heavens, Lillian! what is this?" he ejaculated, impetuously, adding, before she could reply, "Wentworth tells me that—that you take this absurd affair seriously!"

"Seriously, Arthur?" she repeated, turning her eyes wonderingly upon him.

"He says you mean to act as though that ridiculous paper were genuine; but surely that is too absurd!"

"Is it not genuine, then?" she eagerly asked, her face for a moment brightening with hope, as she turned toward me—"is there any doubt about it, Mary?"

"I am sorry to say that I think there is not, Lillian," I replied, feeling that it was less cruel to kill her hope at once than indulge it. "Mr. Wentworth said he had taken counsel's advice, you know."

"Oh, I suppose it may be genuine enough for the kind of thing!" he said, with an effort to speak lightly. "But, of course, none in their senses would for a moment dream of acting upon it. At the very best, it would be only a very doubtful marriage, arranged, I dare say, to satisfy a not too scrupulous girl's vanity. The thing is done every day; and I am sure, on reflection, you will not be so Quixotic as to—"

"If the paper is legal, I must do what is right, Arthur," she murmured, in a low, broken tone.

"Do you think it would be right to blacken your mother's good name and give up the—all your father wished you to have? The truth is, you have not reflected upon what your acknowledgment of that paper will involve, Lillian. You cannot have given any thought to the misery which would follow. Any true friend of yours would have recommended you to at once put that paper into the fire. Is that it?" he added, catching sight of the paper which Robert Wentworth had put down on the table before me while he was speaking, and which I had neglected to take up. "Yes, by Jove! and that settles the matter!" catching it up and tearing it into shreds. "I am your best friend, Lillian."

"No, no, no! Oh, Arthur, the shame of it!"

"Do not be distressed, dear Lillian, you forget that is only my copy of the original," I said. "Mr. Trafford is spared the having done a wrong."

He tried to laugh.

"Of course I was only in jest, Lillian. But, seriously now, you should remember that Marian Reed has been brought up to consider herself what she is. But you— It cannot be possible that you would commit an act which would brand your own mother with shame!"

He was quick to see what weapon struck deep, and did not hesitate to avail himself of it.

She shrunk under his words, with a low cry. Seeing that he was so blind as to imagine that she would yield through suffering, I sternly said,

"Cannot you see that you are wounding her to no purpose, Mr. Trafford? Lillian will do what she believes to be right, come what may."

"Not if there is no interference—not if she is allowed to use her own judgment, Miss Haddon," turning fiercely upon me. "Unfortunately, she has chosen bad advisers."

"Oh, Arthur!"

"Come out with me, Lillian. I am sure I

shall be able to show you the folly of this," he pleaded.

"No, no; I cannot change. Do not leave me, Mary," she entreated, holding fast to me.

"Dear sister," I whispered, "I think it will be better for me to leave you for a few moments. It will be sooner over, and you will find me in the garden presently."

And, gently unclasping her hands, I left her alone with Arthur Trafford.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARIAN'S RISE IN LIFE.

In the garden I found Mr. Wentworth pacing one of the side walks.

"How does she bear it?" he asked, advancing toward me.

"I do not fear for her—eventually; but it is very terrible." Striking my hand upon the arm of a garden-seat, I angrily added, "And he dares to call it love! Thank God, the more she sees of it the less she will believe in it!"

"He is trying to persuade her not to act upon that paper. I saw that was his intention."

"But you were not so blind as to suppose he would succeed?" I retorted.

"No; I was not so blind as that."

"He will only succeed in making her suffer more; though there may be some use in that. Her eyes may be opened to his selfishness and—utter worthlessness, at last. I am proud to say I never called that man my friend."

"Sit down, Miss Haddon; you will want all your nerve presently," he said, gently. "What should we do without you?"

I sat down, and gave way to a few tears.

"There, that's all right: done you good, hasn't it?" in a relieved sort of tone, but looking as though he were not a little puzzled at my getting relief in that fashion. I could not help feeling that he regarded my tears indulgently—as less to be dreaded than fainting, but as curious, decidedly curious, *man* that he was!

The Fates were certainly against my impressing Robert Wentworth with the notion that I was above feminine weakness; he so naturally, and I now believe quite unconsciously, showed a vein of satire upon such occasions. Yet I do not think that he intended to be satirical, when he appeared most so; it simply arose from contrast—his inability to comprehend certain forms of weakness, and his ludicrous gentleness toward it. But be the cause what it might, his gentleness had now the good effect of putting me upon my mettle.

Seeing that I was beginning to recover my dignity, he went on more securely,

"She needs all the help you can give her. Poor Lillian! it is terribly hard for her to lose her lover as well as her name and fortune, Mary" (from this time I was never again "Miss Haddon" to him). "But if she can keep her faith in friendship, she will in time get over the loss of the rest."

Yes, she would lose her lover as well as her name and fortune. Robert Wentworth saw as clearly as I did that sooner or later what had happened would separate them. We saw them

step from the window; and hastily bidding me good-bye, he was turning away.

"Please do not leave me just yet," I pleaded.

"It is better I should go—for you all. The fewer witnesses of the humiliation, the better. By-and-by—in a day or two;" and laying his hand for a moment on mine, as it rested passively on the seat, he walked quickly on down the path toward the door leading from the lower grounds.

As Lillian drew nearer, followed by Arthur Trafford, his lowering brows and angry eyes told me that the beginning of the end had already taken place. But she was not drooping now. She placed her hand in mine and held it with a firm hold, which I thought intimated that she had not succumbed under pressure. Nay, she was growing stronger rather than weaker under it. But she left him to explain; and if I had hoped anything from Arthur Trafford, the way in which he spoke would have destroyed my hope.

"Miss—Farrar" (there was a sufficiently long pause between the words to bring the color rushing to her cheeks) "seems determined to take your advice, Miss Haddon. She means to recognize that marriage, cost what it may."

There was something peculiarly offensive, and I saw that he meant it to be so, in imputing the "advice," as he termed it, to me. But this was not a time for me to retort, so I merely replied,

"You are angry, Mr. Trafford."

"Angry! Is it to be expected that I could stand quietly by and make no protest while such a sacrifice was being made? I suppose you have persuaded Lillian to believe that the consequences to her are nothing to me; you have tried to make her believe that I do not love her."

"I believe that you *do* love her, Mr. Trafford," I replied. It was not his love, but its quality, which I doubted. Looking steadily at him, I added, "And now is the time to prove the worth of your love."

"I can best do that by protecting her interests, Miss Haddon." Turning pleadingly toward Lillian again, he added, "If you would only promise me to delay making it known for a few days—for a day—while we talk it over, and—take further advice. For Heaven's sake, do not do such a rash thing on the impulse of the moment, Lillian! Say you will think it over."

"It needs no thinking," she murmured.

"And my wishes are nothing to you?"

"I hoped—I believed—that you would help me to do what I am doing, Arthur," she replied, in a low, broken voice.

"Is it possible that you can think that I should help you to sacrifice your mother's good name, and disobey your father's wishes, to gratify a sentimental and very doubtful feeling such as this? It will not even be of any real benefit to the girl herself, who is already much better off than she had any right to expect, and happy enough as she is. I say nothing of the entire disregard of *my* wishes—the cruel injustice to me—after my being so long led on to believe in your love for me."

"Spare me!"

"How have you spared me?"

"I *cannot* act differently—I dare not!" she ejaculated, wringing her hands.

"Not though you cast away my love in doing it?"

She was silent, her clasped hands tightening painfully over each other, as she bowed her head in an agony of suffering which his own nature was too shallow to understand.

I think that he once more imagined that he had found the way to influence her, and he impetuously went on,

"You cannot mean to cast me off. Dearest Lillian, I know that your love for me is true, and—"

"I *must* do what is right. Oh, Arthur, it is so hard to bear, and I need help so much! For our love's sake, help me!" putting out her hands toward him with a last appeal.

"You call it right to bring shame upon your dead mother and to be untrue to me?"

"You are pitiless, Mr. Trafford!" I put in, losing all patience. "And you do not know Lillian, or you would see that you are adding to her suffering to no purpose; for you will not alter her determination. She will act according to her perception of what is right in the matter, suffer what she may."

"Then let her take the consequences!" he exclaimed, losing all self-command, and without another word turning away and walking off in a towering passion, as I afterward found, going through the house without speaking to any one and straight down to the railway-station.

Lillian clung sobbing to me a few moments:

"God help me! Pray for me, Mary!"

"You are helped, dear Lillian. Strength *has* been given to you, and the rest will come easier."

"Yes; nothing can be very painful now," wearily.

A servant came to tell us that tea was taken in, and that Mrs. Tipper and Miss Reed were waiting for us.

"Have you quite decided to make it known at once, dear?"

"Yes; the sooner it is over, the better."

"Perhaps it is. Would you like to go to your room, and leave me to prepare them a little, dear Lillian?"

"Yes; I should be very glad—if you do not mind—if you think it is best, Mary."

"I think it best for you to be present," I replied, reflecting that it would at least be better for her than brooding over the miserable scene which had just been enacted. "But if you do not feel equal to it, and would like me to act for you, I will of course do so."

"I will come with you," she quietly replied, putting her hand into mine.

I stopped for a moment to kiss the pure brow; then we went together to the morning-room.

"Excuse my sending, dears; but we thought that you had perhaps forgotten," said the kind little lady. "But where are the gentlemen? James said that Mr. Wentworth had arrived."

"They are gone," I replied, trying to nerve myself for what was to come.

"Gone, dear?" she echoed. Then she nervously added, taking note of Lillian's white face, "Is there anything the matter? Is not Lillian well, Mary?"

I placed Lillian on a couch, and took my seat beside her, then replied,

"She has had a very great" (I was going to say shock, but substituted) "surprise. Some-

thing has occurred which will affect her whole future life."

I saw that Marian's interest was awakened now.

"Affect her whole future life!" she slowly repeated. Then, with a sudden unholy light in her eyes, she eagerly went on, "You don't mean to say that there's been a quarrel, and that it's all broken off between Mr. Trafford and her?"

"Be good enough to listen quietly," I sternly replied. "Lilian wishes me to make the disclosure, and I will do so in as few words as possible. In looking over the contents of a cabinet which had belonged to her father, she found a paper purporting to be an agreement, which, being signed in Scotland, constitutes a marriage between Mr. Farrar and your mother."

"Ma!"

"And after ascertaining that it is genuine, for that kind of thing" (I could not help putting in the last little tag, though I might just as well have left it unsaid, so little did it trouble her), "Lilian has decided to act upon it. She intends to recognize your mother's marriage, though it be at the sacrifice of everything she most cares for in the world."

Mrs. Tipper hurriedly rose from her seat and crossed over to Lilian's side.

"Married to ma!" ejaculated Marian, gazing at us with dilating eyes and parted lips. "My gracious! And if ma was his wife, I must be his daughter—his eldest daughter, and I've as good a right—" She paused, for the moment quite dazzled by the light which was breaking in upon her; then presently added, a little more doubtfully, "But you forget; ma died only fifteen years ago, and Lilian is over seventeen. How could he have two wives, unless—"

"It is Lilian's mother who was wronged," I explained, feeling that the sooner it was all said the better, if I wished to spare Lilian as much as possible from hearing the other's comments.

"My goodness!" in her surprise and excitement, forgetting company manners and her usual fine-ladyism, as well as being entirely oblivious of Lilian's position and consequent feelings in the matter. "Then that was what you meant when you questioned me so closely the other day about the exact time of ma's death. You were sharp!"

Mrs. Tipper had Lilian in her arms, murmuring tender love-speeches over her. Marian might go on as she pleased now.

It did please her to go on.

"To think of ma being Mrs. Farrar, after all! I should like to hear what Mr. Pratt will say to that, after talking about being able to tell a lady when he saw her! Mrs. Farrar! And I'm the eldest daughter, and—" A new thought occurred to her, and she went on, with raised color, "Why, if I'm the eldest daughter—the real Miss Farrar—and there was no will, everything must be mine!"

"Everything you most care for will most probably be yours."

My words brought back the recollection of Arthur Trafford, and she eagerly whispered,

"Does he know, Miss Haddon? Will it make any difference to him, do you think?"

I turned away in disgust, and went toward Lilian.

"Come, Lilian, you need rest and quiet; come

to your room, dear. You will come with us, will you not, Mrs. Tipper?"

"Certainly I will," returned Mrs. Tipper, promptly, rising to accompany us; "my place is with my child."

There was no necessity to apologize for leaving Marian alone. She was for the moment too entirely absorbed in the contemplation of the great change in her prospects to take any notice of our proceedings. "Miss Farrar!" I heard her repeating to herself, as she stood gazing out of the window at the Fairview terraces and gardens, while we made our way toward the door—"Miss FARRAR!"

Well, we were not entirely comfortless; we three could wonderfully help each other. Mrs. Tipper had at once returned to her allegiance, and from henceforth I knew that Lilian would reign alone in her heart. Indeed, I think it was some time before the dear little woman could forgive herself for having been so disloyal to Lilian as to allow the other to reign with her, even for a time. Marian's reception of the news had shocked her a great deal more than it had shocked me, because she was less prepared to see the former as she really was.

We were sitting together, and were already, I was thankful to find, beginning to be able to face the worst and talk over the event with some degree of calmness, when Lydia, the house-maid, tapped at the door with a message from "Miss Farrar."

"If you please, ma'am, Miss Farrar wishes to know if you will come to tea, or if you would prefer its being sent up here?" said the girl, staring at us with all her eyes, astonishment depicted in every line of her face.

Truly Marian had lost no time in making the change in her fortune known. But that was, I suppose, to be expected. Obeying a sign from Lilian and her aunt, I bade Lydia bring some tea to us there.

We none of us went down again that night, although two or three very gracious messages were sent up by "Miss Farrar." The repetition of the name and the girl's whole manner very evidently showed that she had been taken into Marian's confidence. I could see by her hesitating reply to a question of Lilian's that she had been informed that her young mistress had no right to her father's name; and this made me at length decide to give Lydia the true version of the story for circulation. There was now no hope of preventing its getting about, and therefore I determined that Lilian's unhesitating justice should be made known. Following her out of the room, I rapidly gave Lydia an account of what had happened. It was not necessary to dwell upon Lilian's unswerving truth and justice. I just related the facts, and they spoke for themselves.

Lydia was astounded; too much so to pick and choose her words, or to assume a higher morality than she really felt.

"My! Give up all that, when she might so easily have kept it all! Oh, Miss Haddon, an angel straight down from heaven couldn't do more than that! It's almost too good, it really is" (regretfully), "giving up this beautiful house, and thousands and thousands a year, when she might have just torn up that paper and nobody ever been the wiser! Que wouldn't mind if a

bad person had to give it up; but it don't seem right for dear Miss Lilian to suffer—it really don't."

"Do not you think she is better able to endure suffering than a bad person would be, Lydia?"

"I suppose she is, miss; I suppose that's religion; but— There, I can't bear to think of it! That Miss Reed, who isn't fit to hold a candle to her for goodness, leave alone ladyfied ways, to be set up above our Miss Lilian! A pretty mistress *she* will make; though," added Lydia, gradually awakening to the possibility of certain consequences accruing to herself, "but I sha'n't be here long to see it. I've let her know what I think of her a good deal too plain for that; and, for the matter of that, so has every one of us, though she's only got herself to thank for it."

I had had my suspicions that Marian was not liked among the servants; indeed, Becky had more than once given me a hint that the former was just as much disliked in the house as Lilian was beloved. The first thing the next morning Becky showed me something else.

"Why, what is the matter, Becky?" I inquired when she entered the room, her swollen eyelids and red nose betokening recent and violent emotion, which I could not wholly attribute to her attachment to Lilian, and consequent sympathy with her suffering. Though Lilian was growing in Becky's favor, the growth was slow.

"Please don't ask me, miss," lugubriously. Then, after a struggle against herself, she put down the jug of water she was carrying, and burst forth into a wail of sorrow.

"I must ask you, Becky, and of course you must tell me your trouble."

"You've got to go!" she sobbed out. "You're going to be sent away the very first! She told Lydia so this morning. But I'll go too; I told her so. You will let me go with you, won't you, Miss Haddon, dear? You've always been my real mistress in my heart; and it won't make scarce any difference to you, till we can get another place. I can live on as little as you can; and there's another quarter's wages nearly due."

"Hush, Becky! Don't cry so, child!" I murmured, not a little touched, and trying to wipe her tears away. "It is not so bad as you think—not for me. I should very much prefer leaving Fairview now, I assure you, indeed—What if I tell you a secret, Becky—something which no one else, not even Miss Lilian, knows, though I love her so much? I think I can do very well without taking another situation, and I mean to have you with me."

"Do without!" she ejaculated, her thoughts, I think, reverting to my small success in "doing without" at Mrs. Sowler's. "Don't try that again, for—"

"Listen a moment, Becky. In three or four months I am going to be married."

"Married! Oh, Miss Haddon, dear!" she ejaculated, her mouth expanding and her whole face brightening. "And may I guess who he is? I think I can."

"Yes."

"It's that gentleman, Mr. Wentworth, who comes here so often and looks at you so; isn't it? Mr. Saunders said he knew it would come. And I don't believe there's another gentleman

in all the world as is so fit for you, that I don't; for I know a little about him, too. I did not like to tell you before, but that time as—"

"Stop, stop, Becky!" I ejaculated, laughing outright. "What in the world put such an idea into your head? Mr. Wentworth, indeed! Certainly not; quite a different kind of gentleman."

"Oh!" said Becky, her face falling.

"But I do not wish it mentioned, Becky. I only tell you that you may have the pleasure of feeling that you and I need have no anxiety about the future; for of course you will be with me."

There was only one little drawback to Becky's happiness now—the regret that Robert Wentworth was not to be my husband; and I thought his being so great a favorite of hers quite sufficiently accounted for her disappointment. I, in turn, was a little disappointed that the face I had shown her in the locket was so difficult to connect with the idea of my happiness; though I told myself Philip must look much more manly now. But having set Becky's fears at rest, I was a great deal too anxious about Lilian's future to think much about my own.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. TIPPER TO THE RESCUE.

THERE was the gravest reason for anxiety respecting Lilian's future. Marian, at her very best, and with the strongest motive for making herself agreeable to Lilian, had never been a companion for her; and now! Would it be possible for Lilian to remain at Fairview for even the three or four months until Philip's return? I had very grave doubts upon the point.

That Marian was better than she had appeared when she first became acquainted with her good-fortune, I am bound to acknowledge. Although she had at first seen the question entirely from one point of view, it presently became evident that she was not lacking in a certain kind of good-nature, which, in my prejudice against her, I had not given her credit for being capable of. Evidently she now meant to be kind and considerate, and to act generously, according to her light. Indeed, I think she flattered herself that nothing could be more amiable and generous than was her demeanor toward Lilian, the morning after the revelation had been made. If Lilian found her graciousness hard to bear, she did not blame Marian for it. She came to meet Lilian, with a kiss, as the latter entered the breakfast-room, and was altogether a great deal more than usually affectionate in her morning greeting. Moreover, she made some effort to keep her delight at the discovery which had been made as much out of sight as possible.

As yet it was only in Marian's altered bearing toward the servants that the effect which the change in her position had upon her could be seen. She had many a time expressed her opinion that Lilian was not sufficiently dignified in her bearing toward her inferiors, and she was now showing us what she considered to be the proper deportment of a mistress, though the effect was somewhat marred by the reception of it.

But it did me real good to see the fealty of one and all to Lilian. That Marian should at

once pass to the head of the table was, I suppose, under the circumstances, to be expected; and neither Mrs. Tipper nor Lilian appeared in the slightest degree annoyed by it; both were, indeed, too much preoccupied to care where they sat. But I was somewhat amused to find that the arrangement of the breakfast things was swiftly altered, and so far as the replacing the urn, cups and saucers, and so forth, went, where Lilian sat was made the head of the table. Marian looked very indignant and rather foolish; but she could not very well protest at that moment.

I am afraid I did a little enjoy witnessing her mortification, when Marian found that Lilian was treated with as much deference as though she were a queen, and invariably served before herself. Saunders, indeed, made quite a demonstration of obeying Lilian's slightest glance, while the new power was very indifferently waited upon by his subordinate. It was no use giving orders—Saunders was deaf and dumb and blind, so far as Marian was concerned. He could not, and would not, look over her indecent haste in stepping into his beloved young mistress's place; and, as I afterward found, he had made up his mind to leave Fairview immediately the change that had taken place was made known, and, having Lilian to refer to for a character, was independent of Marian's patronage, and took delight in showing that he was.

Lilian's past kindness to them was beginning to bear fruit among the servants. Every one in the house seemed desirous to prove his love and sympathy with her now. She had informed me that she meant to lose no time in putting Marian in possession, and very quickly proved that she was in earnest. As soon as we four were alone together in the morning-room, she quietly began, looking a great deal more self-possessed than the Lilian of yesterday.

"I do not know precisely what has to be done, but I suppose some legal form has to be gone through to put you in possession of—your—rights, Marian; I have therefore telegraphed for the solicitor. He will tell you what has to be done; and I hope it may be got through as quickly as possible, for all our sakes."

"Well, dear, I leave all that to you. I don't want to hurry you; no one could behave more kindly about it than you have, for I'm sure it must be dreadful to have to give up all— But there, of course you will live here with me," added Marian, in an outburst of good-nature. "I'll give you as much as you meant to give me, and—"

"Pray—"

"But I must say it, dear. I am not going to forget all your kindness to me. No one shall be able to say that I have not behaved generously."

"I am sure you mean well," returned Lilian, shrinking nervously under the generosity. "But I do not as yet quite know what I shall do. Of course Auntie and Mary and I must be together, and we none of us mind being poor. Perhaps Mary and I could try opening a little school?" with a glance toward me.

"We shall contrive to get on very well, dearie," was my cheerful little rejoinder.

Marian was about to protest, but Lilian gravely won, on.

"If I can in any way do without accepting your—kindness, you must excuse my saying that I prefer independence."

No mention, I believe no thought, of Arthur Trafford in connection with her future life. She seemed to realize that if he had not already deserted her, he would do so very shortly: it was only a question of time.

"Oh, you mustn't talk like that, you know!" said Marian; "you mustn't, really. It sounds like pride, and why should you be too proud to take an allowance, when I was not? At any rate, you must, and shall, take as much as you used to allow me—two hundred a year, you know;" with the air of feeling that she was acting very liberally.

"Please excuse me now, I have something to attend to up-stairs," said Lilian, moving toward the door. "Come, Mary."

I promptly rose to accompany her. Marian looked as though her good-nature was becoming exhausted.

"Oh, by-the-bye, stop a moment, Miss Haddon. I shall not be in need of a companion: at least, if I have one, I should like to choose for myself; so perhaps, under the circumstances, you will not require a long notice. You couldn't expect it; and—"

"I shall not require any notice whatever from you," was my cheerful rejoinder. "My engagement was with Miss Farrar."

"You forget I am Miss Farrar."

"You will very often have to put up with my forgetfulness upon that point while I remain at Fairview," was my mental comment. But I gravely informed her that she need have no fears about my being troublesome in any way.

Mrs. Tipper had been silent during our conversation, apparently thinking over some little plan of her own; but she rose at once to accompany Lilian and me, no way deterred by Marian's protests. For the first time I noticed a quiet dignity in her bearing, which sat extremely well upon her, as she said,

"My place is by the side of my dear Lilian."

As I had expected, an early train brought Arthur Trafford, eager to recommence his efforts to persuade Lilian to fall in with his wishes; and perhaps not without hope that, now she had had time to realize what the giving up would really be, he would find her more plastic in his hands. As I have said, such as it was, his love was sincere—only one thing seemed worse than losing her; and he would not lose her without a desperate struggle. He came prepared to exert all his powers of persuasion. Her firmness, or obstinacy, as he chose to call it, had quite taken him by surprise, and he could not as yet believe in it, being more inclined to ascribe it to temper than to conviction. He met with a little rebuff in the outset, in her unwillingness to see him alone. He had been shown into the library, where she was sitting with Mrs. Tipper and me, and in reply to his invitation to go elsewhere, she had murmured something about preferring to remain there. As he could not very well request Mrs. Tipper and me to leave them, and we ourselves made no attempt to do so, having, in fact, exchanged a glance which meant not leaving Lilian without orders, he was obliged to put up with our presence.

He found her quite as unmanageable upon the one point as she had been the evening before; and, in his disappointment and mortification, laid bare his own motives more than he was conscious

of doing. And terrible as it was for her at the moment, I was even glad she should see him as he really was. Better that her love should be killed at one blow, since it had to be killed, than by the slow torture which a more gradual unveiling would have entailed.

As she shrunk back, gazing at him with dilated eyes and white face, I knew that she had at last awakened to the truth. *This* was not the hero she had worshipped—this was not one whose capacity for doing great deeds only lacked opportunity for its exercise. He could not help showing us what it was which he most felt the loss of.

Then he was impolitic enough to attack me before her; something more than insinuating that I was the marplot who had come between him and his happiness. In his heat, he could not perceive that if I were really what he accused me of being, he was paying Lillian a very bad compliment in declaring that she was completely under my influence.

"You cannot deny that you have encouraged her in this!" he angrily exclaimed, turning upon me. "You dare not say that you have not!"

"I dare to say that I honestly think she has done what is right, and would do it though the whole world turned its back upon her, and I am proud to be considered her friend, Mr. Trafford."

"My only one!" sobbed Lillian, clinging to me.

"No, indeed. Every one who respects truth and unselfishness must be your friend, dear Lillian."

"I am sure Mrs. Tipper will be more open to reason!" he hotly ejaculated, turning toward her, as she sat regarding him very attentively. "You, madam, will not, I am sure, desire to see your brother's wishes so disregarded."

But he had revealed himself to her as well as to us, and found Mrs. Tipper also was on Lillian's side. Indeed, she came out quite grandly. If, as I suspected, he had hitherto attributed her amiability to want of character, he could do so no longer. She was worthy of being Lillian's aunt, and not at all unlike her niece, allowing for the difference in early training. There was a grave, quiet dignity in her tone and bearing as she expressed her entire approval of the step Lillian had taken, which appeared to quite take him by surprise.

"I thought you loved Lillian, Mrs. Tipper."

"I do love her, Mr. Trafford, more than ever, since she has shown me that not even her love for you can turn her aside from doing what she believes to be right."

But its being right was just what he would not for a moment allow, and he again and again went over the same arguments, now pleading, now reviling, still unwilling to believe in the utter uselessness of it all.

"It was all very well now, in the first flush of thinking she was doing a generous action; but how would it be by-and-by, when she found herself penniless and dependent upon the bounty of another, and that other Marian Reed? A nice thing to be patronized and walked over by a girl like that!" and so forth, in the one-sided, unreasoning way with which people who have a special end in view are apt to talk, basing his arguments upon the consequences which might ensue from the act, instead of upon the right or wrong of committing it.

"My dear Lillian will not be dependent upon Miss—Marian's bounty, nor will she be penniless or homeless, Mr. Trafford," said Mrs. Tipper. "I did not like to mention it until I was quite sure; but I have made inquiries, and Mr. Markham tells me that the two hundred a year which was placed to my account was settled upon me by my brother after my husband's death. I recollect Jacob telling me, when I first came to live at Fairview, that he had made me independent; but I did not understand it as I do now. Of course, my dear Lillian and Mary will share it with me."

What a relief it was to hear this for Lillian's sake! It had been so painful to think of her being obliged to be dependent upon Marian, even for a time. And how hearty, though at the moment only expressed by a look, was my gratitude to the dear little woman for her kindness and consideration for me! She did not know that I only needed her love. I had received fifty pounds for my salary, and that would more than suffice to keep me until Philip's return; but it did me real good to know that she was not aware of my prospects when she so generously included me with Lillian in the offer of a home.

Lillian got through the pitiful scene with her quondam lover better, on the whole, than she had done the night before. His threat, once more used in the heat of the moment (I did not give him credit for seriously entertaining the idea as yet), to the effect that her act would part them, was acquiesced in; not angrily, nor defiantly—with no attempt to conceal the pain it cost her, but acquiesced in. He might come again and again, and threaten as he pleased; it would be no use now. Moreover, I had the comfort of believing that, bitter as the suffering was to her, it would not be of long duration. Though she as yet knew it not, he had not the power to shadow her future life. In truth, he was likely to suffer a great deal more than she was. Say what he might, he estimated her more highly than he had ever done before. The very decision which he so complained of raised her in his estimation, while all the glamour was gone from him in her eyes now.

He left no stone unturned while it was still not too late, and brought his sister to assist him. Both, I saw, attributed a great deal of blame to me in the matter; and both were now candid enough to give more expression to their antagonism than they had previously done. But their antagonism I had no right whatever to complain of, since my estimation of them was not higher than theirs of me.

Mrs. Chichester was in a somewhat awkward position. She had the gravest reasons for doing her best to further her brother's wishes, and was at the same time very desirous of keeping in Robert Wentworth's good graces. All her diplomatic powers were brought into play; and she had the mortification of perceiving that it was all to no purpose. It was almost amusing to see her assuring Mr. Wentworth, with tearful eyes and clasped hands, that whatever others might think, she meant to uphold her dearest Lillian; in contrast with certain little speeches addressed to Marian, which occasionally met my ears. One thing was evident, she did not wish to get out of favor with the new power.

There was no fencing between the two men. A sharp hand-to-hand encounter for a few moments, and then friendship lay dead. Robert Wentworth had spoken his mind; and the other had declared that from thenceforth all friendship was over between them.

Arthur Trafford was in some measure, perhaps, to be pitied, at this crisis of his life. Enervated by a life of luxury and indolence, he probably lacked the power to put his shoulder to the wheel, and try to earn a living for himself and Lilian. Supposing the idea to have crossed his mind, and he was not so utterly worthless that it may not have done so, he must have realized what terribly uphill work it would be to commence the struggle for a livelihood at eight-and-twenty, and with no special aptitude or preparation for any profession. He had lost all—the girl he loved, her fortune, and his friend; and I will do him the justice to say that the loss of Robert Wentworth's friendship was no light trouble to him, though he himself had cast it off. He was a poorer man than I had imagined him to be; having, in fact, lived upon the principal of the small sum left him by his father, and depending upon his marriage with Lilian for future supply.

I was heartily glad when the matter was in Mr. Markham's hand, and so far placed beyond dispute; after which we were for a short time left undisturbed by Arthur Trafford and his sister. But one visitor made her appearance at Fairview, who occasioned Marian not a little mortification, of which I was an unwilling witness. It was the third morning after the discovery had been made known. Lilian, who spent most of her time in her own room with Mrs. Tipper, had asked me to bring her a book from the drawing-room. I entered the room, and had just reached the table where I was to find the book, when the sound of half-suppressed sobbing warned me that I was intruding upon some one; and glancing round, I was astonished to see Marian seated on one of the couches, and the figure of a homely-looking woman kneeling at her feet, with her hands raised as if in supplication, and tears streaming from her eyes. In another moment I recognized Mrs. Pratt; and hastily catching up the book I wanted, turned to quit the room, quite as much averse to intrude as they could desire me to be. But Mrs. Pratt had recognized me, and entreated me to stay and try to help her.

"You are the lady who came with Miss Farrar that day. Do, pray, ma'am, try what you can to persuade Miss Reed not to injure the dear young lady who has been so good to her."

"I am afraid I have no power to do so, Mrs. Pratt," I returned.

"Really, aunt, I little thought *this* would be the consequence of my telling you about my good fortune. It doesn't seem natural to take it in that way, it really doesn't! I made sure you had come to see the place and congratulate me, and I had you shown in here on purpose that you might see for yourself. But instead of being glad, you behave like this, wanting me to give it all up, and before Miss Haddon, too!"

"You know what I have told you; pray, think better of it, Miss Reed, dear."

I had reached the door again, when Mrs. Pratt's words caused me to pause, my pulses throbbing

a little more rapidly than usual. What if there were in truth some bar to Marian's right, and Mrs. Pratt knew it? I waited.

"What you have told me is no reason for giving up what belongs to me," angrily returned Marian. "And I must once more remind you that I am Miss Farrar now."

"It is a reason, and a good one. I have told you why your mother would never have made use of that paper; and if you turn against that sweet young lady, who was so good to you, nothing but sorrow will come of it."

"It's all nonsense saying ma would not have made use of it. How could she, when pa had the paper in his own possession?"

"I believe he only had it among the letters and papers she wished to be sent him after her death. She would never have used it if she had known it was legal, because—you force me to say so—she knew that she was not worthy to be called his wife!"

"You are very cruel and wicked to say such things, and you shall not go on!" ejaculated Marian, with flaming cheeks. "A pretty sister you must be, to talk in that way!"

Mrs. Pratt wrang her hands, crying bitterly.

"I loved her through it all; she knew I did; and I've done my duty by you; but I cannot see that dear young lady turned out of house and home, without—"

"Good gracious, aunt, how you talk! As though I were going to turn her out of house and home, when Miss Haddon knows how generously I have behaved, if she would acknowledge it!"

I took Mrs. Pratt's hand in mine, and looking into her eyes, solemnly asked,

"Will you tell me the truth, Mrs. Pratt? Was there anything in your sister's life which prevented her marriage with Mr. Farrar being a legal one?"

"I can't say so much as that, miss—she wasn't married to anybody else; but he knew, and she knew, that she was not worthy to claim a wife's—"

"That's quite enough, aunt," interrupted Marian. "They are my rights; and I've told you over and over again that I don't mean to give my rights up. It looks as if you were envious of my good fortune—it really does. Not that it will make any difference to me in what I mean to do by-and-by," she added, largely. "I intend to make you and Mrs. Pratt a handsome allowance; and some of these days Susy shall come down and see Fairview."

"Not a penny; your uncle and me wouldn't take a penny of the money, if we were starving!"

"Ah, you will think better of it by-and-by," complacently returned Marian. "And you won't find that I shall draw back from my word. Your behavior to-day won't make any difference to me, though some people wouldn't notice you again after it."

Mrs. Pratt drew her shawl about her with trembling hands, and turned toward the door.

"Don't go away like that, aunt. You haven't seen anything. Let me show you the conservatory, and the—"

But Mrs. Pratt hurried out of the room, and was gone before Marian could prevent her. The latter stood for a moment looking doubtfully at me, then said, a little consciously,

"I suppose it's no use asking you not to mention what aunt said, Miss Haddon?"

"It would be no use, if my mentioning it would be of any service to Lillian," I replied. "But as I do not wish to give her unnecessary pain, I will not tell her—at any rate for the present."

"Nor Mrs. Tipper?"

"No, unless I at any time see more necessity for telling her than I do now," I said, as I quitted the room.

I was not a little disturbed by what Mrs. Pratt had revealed. It seemed doubly hard that Lillian's mother should be displaced by a woman whom her own sister acknowledged to be unworthy of the name of wife. In my anxiety, I put a few cautious words to Mr. Markham in a few minutes' *tête-à-tête* I contrived during one of his visits: but I only got a few cautious words in return, and the information that the Scotch marriage was undoubtedly a legal one.

Meantime I was more than once obliged to remind Marian that she was not mistress of Fairview until the legal formalities were gone through which should put her in possession. She had at once commenced to assume the dignity of the position, and did not hesitate to call the servants to order when they became too openly oblivious of it. Nor, indeed, did she hesitate to point it out to Lillian, when the latter for a moment forgot the change in her position, and gave some little order to the servants. But with Lillian it was only a momentary and quite natural forgetfulness. Her reign had hitherto been so supreme and undisputed at Fairview, that she could not all at once get accustomed to the altered aspect of affairs. But her apologies were very graciously accepted.

"Don't say a word, dear, it's a wonder you don't forget oftener; and I'm sure no one could be nicer than you are about it, no one!" And she was candid enough to add, "I'm not sure that I should have taken it so well as you do myself, though I know how to behave as well as most people; and no one shall say I can't be generous now."

I believe that she did honestly try to be what she considered generous. But her conception of generosity! Poor Lillian found Marian's generosity and good-nature a great deal harder to bear than her reverses just now.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARIAN'S GENEROSITY.

MARIAN was, I believe, genuinely disappointed at Lillian's decision to leave Fairview and retire with her aunt to some cottage home.

"It will look so!" she ejaculated again and again, which words perhaps best expressed her sentiments upon the point. "People might think I had not been inclined to behave handsomely toward you, you know; but I'm sure no one could offer more fairly than I do. There's the run of the place, and a carriage to ride out in, and your keep, and all that; besides two hundred a year to spend as you please. I had only two hundred a year to do everything with, you know, before pa died. And if that isn't enough—well, I shouldn't perhaps mind saying—"

"It would be a great deal more than enough," murmured poor Lillian. "Only I must be with my dear aunt wherever she is, and she prefers having a home of her own, however humble. Do you not, auntie?"

Mrs. Tipper was very decided upon that point, and Marian did not object. "Auntie" was quite welcome to consult her own taste in the matter. Indeed, Marian was more ready to fall in with the little lady's desire to leave Fairview than it was, under the circumstances, quite polite to be.

"But for you, dear, it is altogether different," she went on to urge. "You are young, and have been brought up like a lady; and it really seems quite cruel for you to be going to live at a cottage, when there's such a home as this offered you."

"I should prefer being with my aunt," repeated Lillian, with flushed cheeks, turning her eyes, full of tears, lovingly toward the little lady, who nodded and smiled as though to say, "Do not fear my being wounded by anything that is said, my dear. I shall only be troubled when you are."

"You haven't tried it yet, dear," sagely returned Marian; "and you don't know what it is to live like poor people. Think better of it; and I will have a *distang-gay* lady to go about with us; and we will fill the place with company, and have lots of gayeties. Do, pray, think what you will be giving up before you make up your mind."

But she found that Lillian was not to be tempted, and Marian was at length brought to see that her arguments were of no avail. So I think she satisfied herself with the reflection that she had done all that could be expected of her, only stipulating that Lillian should acknowledge her generosity to "people," as she indefinitely termed the Fairview world.

"It is only fair that it should be made known that I was ready to act generously, you know."

Lillian promised that it should be made known. Moreover, when at length matters were finally settled, Marian begged Lillian to take anything which she had a fancy for with her.

"I mean, of course, the things that have been given to you, you know," she said, a little hurriedly, as though afraid that her generosity might be interpreted too literally, adding, with a little laugh, "If you took *everything* you fancied, there would be nothing left at Fairview, I expect. But there, just say what is yours, and I will take your word for it!" she ejaculated, in another outburst of good-nature.

If it had been left to Lillian, very little would have been taken from Fairview. But it was not left to her; and Mrs. Tipper and I were more business-like, and did not hesitate to secure for Lillian not a few valuables. That little lady recollected a great many things which had been named by Mr. Farrar as gifts to his child. Fortunately for her, he had been in the habit of talking about any new purchases which he made to add to the glories of Fairview as presents to Lillian. In fact, had we kept strictly to the letter of Marian's offer, and taken whatever had been given to Lillian, we might have carried away nearly everything the house contained. As it was, we did not scruple to claim a great deal. Her mother's jewellery; a nice little collection of pictures; the grand piano, which had been a birth-

day present; and an endless assortment of valuables, even to a new silver dinner-service. For the last we were indebted to Saunders, who reminded Mrs. Tipper and Lilian that Mr. Farrar had mentioned at the dinner-table having ordered the new pattern expressly for his daughter, by-and-by naming the cost. Poor Mr. Farrar! it is pitiful to reflect how glad we were to avail ourselves of his little ostentatious speeches for the benefit of his child.

But, in spite of herself, Marian began to look very grave and anxious as one thing after another was eagerly named by the servants as "Miss Lilian's." They had got scent of what was going on, and were eager to give evidence of this or that having been given to her. She had made up her mind to be generous, and strove hard with herself. But when it came to be a question of a suite of diamonds, she could control herself no longer, nervously questioning as to the evidence of its having been a gift to Lilian's mother. Was the inscription inside the case—"To my dear wife, on our wedding-day"—sufficient to make the diamonds Lilian's? and would Lilian mind repeating his exact words when her father put them into her hands on her last birthday?

"Of course, I only want what is right; but she wasn't his wife, you know; so it couldn't be their wedding-day," anxiously ejaculated Marian, her eyes dwelling fondly upon the jewels in their open cases.

Fortunately for us, Lilian fled at the first words, and we had Robert Wentworth to help us, so we battled courageously for the diamonds, and at length gained the day. Marian was obliged to yield, though she did so with a sigh over "pa's extravagance." "He never gave diamonds to ma! Why, Lilian will have quite a large fortune to take away, with one thing and another!" Then, in reply to some allusion from Mr. Wentworth about the fortune Lilian was *leaving*, he was sharply reminded that it was not hers to leave. "People seem to forget that it's only my rights, and if it were not for my generosity things would be very different for Lilian." For she was, I think, beginning to feel that her generosity was not sufficiently recognized, and it required some little encouragement in the way of being appreciated to keep it alive.

Meanwhile Mrs. Tipper and I were quietly at work in search of a cottage. We succeeded beyond our expectations, being fortunate enough to secure a pretty little place on the outskirts of a neighbor village at a very moderate rent, Robert Wentworth giving us material assistance in the negotiations. Having overcome the dear little woman's scruples about accepting half of my fifty pounds as my share toward the first three months' house-keeping, we gave ourselves up to the business of furnishing; and in this also Robert Wentworth was of much assistance to us, though I do not think that any one besides myself attributed it to anything warmer than friendship. Becky and I and a couple of work-people were busily engaged from morning till night in arranging and making ready, in order that no time might be lost in getting away from Fairview before Marian's good-nature altogether collapsed. Lilian was becoming very anxious to take her departure, and it was evident that to Mrs. Tipper herself the change would be a very welcome one.

"To tell the truth, my dear, it will be a real blessing to me to live in a small house, and be able to go into my own kitchen again," she confided to me. "You and the dear child will be the company in the parlor; and I shall make the puddings and pies, and know what's in them!" she ejaculated, enjoying her little jest.

Of course I did not mean to be idle, though I agreed that the dear little lady should reign supreme in the kitchen. Becky was to be our factotum; and very proud she was of the position, making it very evident that Fairview had altogether lost its attractions for her now. We began to plume ourselves upon having quite a little model home, where nothing but love and peace would be admitted. Ah me! it was as well we should think so!

It was a very pretty if somewhat fantastically built cottage, which had been erected for an ornamental lodge at the entrance of a fine estate, the property of an old but impoverished family, which had been brought to the hammer and sold in separate portions. The house itself—a fine old place, built in one of the Tudor reigns—stood on an eminence some two miles distant, and had been taken on lease by some benevolent lady for the purpose of making a home for girls who had suffered imprisonment, with a view to prevent their further degradation.

Our cottage was situated just out of the village, which lay in the hollow at the foot of the hill, on the side of which stood the house which I have mentioned as being visible from one part of the Fairview grounds, and which I so coveted for my married life with Philip. A little to the left, at the back of our cottage, still stood a portion of the fine old woods, as they had been for many a generation, of the A—— family. The land on the other side of what had once been the avenue had been turned into hop-fields, and so forth. In front of the cottage the space had been so much encroached upon that what had once been a fine private road was now but a narrow lane. Branching from that lane, on the right was the village, and on the left another lane leading to a field, through which there was a right of way to the railway-station; and from the stile of that field ran two paths, the lane I have mentioned passing the cottage and on to the village, and another lane at right angles with it leading through the woods.

There was some little talk of *my* house soon being in the market, said the work-people, to whom I was curious enough to put a few questions about it. The lease was expiring, it seemed, and the present residents did not intend to renew it. This was news indeed. If, by good fortune, Philip arrived in time to secure it, how delightful it would be, the two others I most cared for in the world living so near us! How delightful to be able to show my appreciation of the kindness I had received in some better way than by words! Then I pleased myself with another pretty picture of the future, in which Lilian and Robert Wentworth were the principal figures.

That Lilian would very long remain as depressed as she now was, I did not believe; her mind was a too healthy one for that. Indeed, the reaction had already set in. After the first shock was got over, she was, I think, not a little astonished at the comparatively small amount of

regret she suffered on account of the loss of her lover. It might be that she was beginning to realize the fact that her love for him had never really been what she had imagined it. In one point she was mistaken. She believed that he also had deceived himself, and was firmly persuaded that he did not love her, and never had.

I knew that Arthur Trafford was in truth suffering the keenest misery in his efforts to tear himself away from her. He loved her better than all the world, except himself; and although he had not sufficient manliness and moral courage to make an effort in the right direction, I was glad to see he had the grace to be heartily ashamed of the part he was playing. I could not help being a little amused by Mrs. Tipper's mild suggestions, in the midst of his wild ravings against his miserable fate. Indeed, her very practical advice about looking for work, and never blaming fate or giving up hope as long as he had youth and strength and his two hands to use, was not the lightest punishment he had just now to bear, Lillian being present, sitting white and silent with downcast eyes. I think he was almost driven to the verge of entreating her to share his poverty and challenge fortune with him; but he did not get beyond the verge. Marian silently watched with keen eyes and heightened color, and it was not difficult to read her thoughts. She still found her position at Fairview a somewhat anomalous one, and would continue to find it so as long as Lillian remained there, the latter being treated as mistress, and she herself as much as possible ignored by the servants.

It was, I think, some little relief to us all when the cottage was declared ready for occupation. Mrs. Tipper and I contrived to spare Lillian the leave-takings and final wrench of separation from the home she had always been taught to consider her own. We invited her to go to look at the progress of our work; and once there, we hinted that she might just as well remain at the cottage. There need be no returning to Fairview unless she desired it. As we had hoped, Lillian was only too glad to avail herself of the suggestion, unconsciously showing how much she had dreaded a parting scene. So we three took tea together in the little parlor, which was to serve as dining-room. Our drawing-room, as we jestingly called it, on the other side of the house, was left unfinished, for Lillian and me to arrange according to our own taste—in truth, to afford some occupation for the former's hands and thoughts, and to leave no time for dwelling upon by-gones, at any rate for a while. Mrs. Tipper and Becky had contrived to make it appear quite a festive occasion, the tea-table being spread with all sorts of little home-made dainties, which we felt bound to make a demonstration of enjoying, and I verily believe did enjoy a great deal more than we were conscious of doing, so pleasant was the contrast with the meals we had latterly partaken at Fairview. We could now freely show our thoughts to each other, and that itself was no slight boon, after being obliged to pick and choose our words, as we had been in Marian's presence.

Afterward I left Lillian with Mrs. Tipper: I knew that she would put aside her own feelings in her desire to please the dear little mistress of the cottage, by showing an interest in the ar-

rangements which had been made, etc.; and I had to set forth for Fairview again, in order to make the best excuses I could for Lillian's non-return.

I found Marian very much inclined to take offense at the method of quitting Fairview. Of course she would have sent Lillian in the carriage in a proper way; and she ought to have been allowed to show people what her feeling in the matter was.

"Going off in that way makes it look as though I had not been inclined to treat Lillian handsomely; and I call it very unfair toward me."

I intimated that Mrs. Tipper and I had hoped to spare Lillian's feelings in leaving the home she had been taught to consider her own.

"But I think my feelings ought to have been consulted too, Miss Haddon. It's all very well to talk of Lillian's feelings; but it is not fair to let people think I don't want to do right," she repeated, walking to and fro amidst her gorgeous surroundings. "Of course they will think so, now she has gone off in that way, and all my generosity goes for nothing! Besides, I was not prepared to be left alone in this sudden way, the servants all as upstart and impertinent as ever they can be. And I haven't been able to engage a lady-companion yet."

In truth, Miss Farrar—I suppose I must give her the name now—had found well-born ladies (she had made it a *sine quâ non* that the lady she sought should be well-born as well as everything else that was desirable in a companion) were either at a premium just then, or they did not incline toward Fairview, for she had not as yet succeeded in finding one after her own heart. In her difficulty, she extended the olive-branch to me, beginning by a little pointedly reminding me that the burden was already heavy enough upon Mrs. Tipper's shoulders, and opining that I should no doubt be glad of something to do.

"I shouldn't mind paying you a pound a week till I got suited; and," she was good enough to add, "we don't know but what a permanent engagement might come about if we get on together."

I declined with as good a grace as I could, politely but very decidedly; and then went upstairs to label the boxes and parcels which were to be sent down to the cottage, and make sundry other arrangements for a final flitting.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. CHICHESTER'S ARRANGEMENT.

WHEN, an hour later, I re-entered the drawing-room to make my adieu to Miss Farrar, I found that the aspect of affairs had altogether changed. She was lounging in her favorite attitude of negligent ease, in a low chair, playing with the appendages to her watch-chain, and opposite to her sat Mrs. Chichester.

Marian did not give me time to speak, hurriedly commencing, with haughty graciousness, the moment I entered the room,

"Oh, it is Miss Haddon. Come in, Miss Haddon. I am sorry to disappoint you; but I have been thinking the matter over since I spoke to you, and have come to the conclusion that I shall not require your services. The truth is, I

could not feel quite sure that you would suit me, and therefore I have made another arrangement—a much more satisfactory one.”

For a moment I did not quite comprehend the state of affairs, asking myself if she could have so far misinterpreted my words as to suppose that I had expressed a wish to remain with her. Then the truth flashed upon me, and I calmly replied,

“It is quite possible I might not have snited you, Miss Farrar. If, as I suppose, you have made an arrangement for Mrs. Chichester to reside with you, I believe you will find her much more amenable and easy to get on with than I might prove to be.”

Marian looked at me doubtfully, not quite sure whether to interpret my words favorably or not. Mrs. Chichester's lips closed tightly for a moment, then she said, with her accustomed gentleness and suavity,

“The arrangement between Miss Farrar and myself is so essentially different from ordinary engagements, Miss Haddon; simply a friendly one.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Marian, with a grand air. “Accepting an occasional little offering” (here I knew she was quoting) “is quite different from receiving a salary, you know.”

I cheerfully agreed that it was different, and was mischievous enough to congratulate “Miss Farrar” upon having found so disinterested a friend in the time of need.

With heightened color, Mrs. Chichester explained that she had only done what any moderately good-natured person would do, in offering to stay with one who had been deserted by those who ought not to have deserted her.

“Yes; that's what I call it!” said Marian, eagerly catching at the word. “I've been deserted by those who ought not to have deserted me! And here's Caroline, that I never cared for, and who I thought never cared for me, turns out my best friend. Caroline had taken a great fancy to me from the beginning, only she was afraid of showing it, in case Lillian should be jealous. But since my sister has chosen to desert me as she has, she can't complain about my choosing a fresh friend. As you know, I have done all I could to make things pleasant for Lillian. No one in the world could act more generously than I have done to her. Any one might tell that, by the heaps and heaps of things which have been taken out of the house, without my saying a word. And then the piano, when it was found that it would have to be sold on account of being too large for the cottage, I paid the price it cost two years ago. Two hundred and fifty pounds for a second-hand piano, Caroline! I shouldn't mind if I'd been treated accordingly. But to go away like this, without so much as saying thank you! As Caroline says, it is treating one too bad; it really is!”

I glanced smilingly at Caroline's flushed face, and then wished them good-afternoon.

“I hear that you are going to stay at the cottage, Miss Haddon?”

“For three or four months I am, Mrs. Chichester.”

“Until you find another engagement, I presume?” she asked, eying me curiously.

“Until I make another engagement,” I smilingly replied.

But the “three or four months” had aroused

her suspicions, though I did not perceive in what way.

“You have made the best of your sojourn at Fairview, Miss Haddon,” softly.

“The very best, Mrs. Chichester,” was my cheerful response. Although I did not see the whole of her meaning, as I was to see it later, I knew enough to be sure the drift of it was not very friendly. One thing was very palpable—I made no advance in Mrs. Chichester's good graces.

They followed me to the hall with messages for Lillian.

“I can't forget that she's pa's daughter, you know,” said Marian, once more striving to be generous. “Give my love to her, and tell her not to hesitate about sending for anything she may require from the garden, or what not; she will miss things so at first, you know. And I don't see why she shouldn't have milk; cook said we have more than she can use just now. If we go on keeping two cows, she shall always have it. And say that the very first time we drive out I will call at the cottage.”

Saunders, who opened the door for me, drew his hand across his eyes as he strove to stammer out a message to the “dear young mistress.”

“Of course you will come to see her; she will be desirous to hear how you are getting on, Saunders,” I replied, beginning to find some difficulty in keeping up my own courage. But there was more to try me yet. Before I could make my escape, every servant employed in or about the house had crowded into the hall, down to Tom, the garden-boy.

“Tell the dear young mistress our hearts ache for her.” “Tell her there isn't one here as wouldn't go barefoot to serve her. God bless her!” “Tell her her kindness to mother will never be forgotten as long as I live.” “Why didn't she let us say good-bye, Miss Haddon?” “Why didn't she shake hands with us before she went, miss?”—they asked, one after the other.

The wisdom of our getting her away as we did was manifest enough.

“It would have been more than she could have borne,” I replied, in a broken voice. “But it will do her good to hear of your showing so much kindly feeling, though she never doubted your attachment to her. And of course she expects that you will all go to see her.”

“Ay, that we will!”

Then I got my own share of parting good wishes as we shook hands all round, not at all disturbed in the process by the sudden slamming of the drawing-room door and the violent ringing of a bell.

Satisfactory as it all was from one point of view, I congratulated myself upon having contrived to spare Lillian this scene, as well as the final good-bye to the home that ought to have been her own.

I turned from the main road and walked slowly down across the fields at the back of Fairview until I reached the stile at the end of the lane. Then seating myself upon the cross step, I yielded to a little sentiment, telling myself that there must be no such indulgence at the cottage for some time to come. We needed our full share of common-sense to keep the atmosphere healthy. It was all very well trying to assume philosophic airs about wealth; it did very well in my own

case, for instance; but I really could not see that it was better for Lillian to lose her large fortune—and so lose it. Into what different channels would the money have passed from her hands, how different a class of people would have been benefited from those who would now be the recipients of it! Granted that Lillian herself might be as happy in the future as though she possessed a large income, how many would be the worse for her not possessing it! The other was already developing a mean nature, and would grudge expenditure upon anything which did not immediately minister to her own gratification. And so forth and so forth I complained to myself in the short-sighted way with which many of us are apt to judge when looking at a question from one point of view only. I did not even take into consideration the fact that the loss of fortune had already brought about one good effect—that of making Arthur Trafford appear in his true colors, and so sparing Lillian from much misery in the future.

"How did she bear it, Miss Haddon?"

I looked up to find Robert Wentworth standing on the other side of the stile. I rose, shook hands, and replied,

"As you might expect she would. But we contrived to spare her a final parting scene," going on to tell him how we had managed it.

"A good idea. And Mrs. Chichester has stepped in, has she?" he added, musingly. "Well, I suppose that might have been expected too. Trafford will have a useful ally."

I told him of the offer I had received, smiling a little over the recital.

"Fortunately you are not like other women; you can smile at that sort of thing. And you will not, I trust, be again subjected to anything of the kind. You will remain at the cottage as long as you need a home now?"

"Yes," I replied, in a low voice, feeling the hot color cover my face in my confusion at hearing such an allusion from him, wondering not a little how he had come to know what I had been so reticent, even to those I loved best, about. His tone and look seemed, I thought, so plainly to imply that he did know.

"But I suppose that is forbidden ground just at present?" he went on, as I imagined answering my very thoughts.

"Yes," I whispered, stupidly, shy of talking about my love-affair to him, yet a little ashamed of my shyness, as more befitting a young, romantic girl than myself.

"I will obey"—glancing down at me with grave pleasantness—"if you will consent that some limit shall be put to the restraint. Shall we say three months?"

I smiled assent. He really did know, then; even to the time Philip was expected. I did not like to ask him how he had gained the knowledge, as that might lead to more talk upon the subject than I cared to enter into. In fact, I was completely taken by surprise, and not quite equal to the occasion.

But I soon contrived to account for his knowledge of my secret. My engagement was well known to Philip's brother and the latter's friends, and it was quite possible that Robert Wentworth might know some of them. But however he had found it out, I was quite content that he should have done so. It would be all the easier to pave

the way toward a friendship between Philip and him by-and-by. For the present I quietly returned to the subject which I believed to be most interesting to him, and we talked over Lillian's prospects hopefully, if a little gravely, as we walked slowly on down the lane.

"You think there are really some grounds for hoping that she may forget him?" he asked, anxiously. "I should not judge hers to be a changeable mind."

"Changeable! No; if she had really loved Arthur Trafford, as she fancied she did, there would be indeed no hope."

"Fancied?"

"Yes; I firmly believe it *was* fancy. She never loved the real Arthur Trafford; she is only just beginning to know him as he is."

"Well, I suppose it is all right, so far as she is concerned; and yet—constancy in love and friendship is part of my religion. One does not like to have that faith disturbed?"—with what I fancied was a questioning look.

"You forget that Lillian was almost a child when the acquaintance commenced; barely sixteen. Though I hold that she will be constant to her love, in even ceasing to care for Arthur Trafford. Do not you see that she has never known the real man until now—that, in fact, she has been in love with an ideal?" I replied, under the impression that he was putting the questions which he wished to be combated, and willing to indulge him so far.

"It must be rather hard upon a man to discover, after a long engagement, that he does not accord with his lady-love's ideal—all the harder if the discovery does not happen to be made until after marriage," he said; "and I think you will have to acknowledge that the ideal you talk about ought to preserve a woman from falling in love with the counterfeit, rather than lead her to it."

"You are talking about a woman, and I a girl."

"You must not forget that she was old enough to engage herself to him. How if she had continued in her blindness until too late—how if she had become his wife?"

"If she had become his wife before her eyes were opened, Lillian would in time have recognized her own weakness in the matter, and blamed no one else. Moreover, she would have made a good wife."

"Yes; I suppose it would have been patched up that way; by the slow, heart-breaking process of smiling at grief, and all the rest of it. And of course you mean to imply that her fate would have its use, in the way of serving as a warning to incautious youth against being in love with ideals?"

"Of course I meant no such thing, and you know that I did not," I replied, laughing outright. "I should think there is need for a great deal of the ideal in all love, to keep it alive."

"Ah, now we are getting on to fresh ground," he said, enjoyably. "Let me see; the proposition is that love needs a great deal of the ideal to keep it alive; and yet—"

But I was not going to indulge him with a disquisition upon love; giving him a Roland for an Oliver, in my own fashion: "No one could be more glad that Lillian's has turned out to be only an ideal love than yourself."

"Ah, that is not spoken with your usual accuracy of statement. Should you not rather have said that no one could be more sorry than I that her ideal did not preserve her from—"

"She *is* preserved; and that is what you care most about."

He smiled. "Well, perhaps it is."

When we arrived at the turn in the lane leading to the cottage, he took leave of me. I did not invite him to go in with me, and I think he quite understood my motive for not doing so, this first evening of our entrance upon a new life. But he responded as heartily as I could wish, when I expressed a hope that he would come as frequently as he could to the cottage, adding that we should expect a great deal from him, now that he had shown us how helpful he could be in times of emergency. "Besides, it will be good for us, I suppose, to occasionally see one of the lords of creation, lest we should come to forget that we are but women."

"Yes; *you* at least require to be occasionally taken down."

"You must consider me very amiable to say that in my presence."

"Did you hurt your hand when you struck it upon the seat the other day? From the violence of the blow, I was afraid you would suffer a little afterward."

"Surely you did not call that temper?"

"Oh dear no; I did not venture to call it anything. What did you call it?"

"Righteous indignation," I calmly replied.

"Righteous indignation! Oh, indeed! Then if I have cause to be angry with a person, it is righteous indignation to attack his friend, and enforce my arguments by blows upon a piece of wood."

"You are worse than usual to-night; but come soon to see Mrs. Tipper and Lillian," I said, smiling.

"Let us shake hands upon that."

I stood looking after him a moment, as he walked away in the twilight with the long, easy, swinging motion natural to one of a powerfully built frame. Moreover, I knew that his mental power was at least in equal proportion to his physical strength, and had no fears as to Lillian's happiness by-and-by. The only drawback to her happiness would be the remembrance of past weakness, and that may not be the worst kind of drawback one could have in the time of prosperity.

As we sat that night by the open window, the May moon flooding the lovely scene outside, resting, as I persuaded myself, tenderly on *my* house by the hill-side, nearly facing us, from the other side of the village, we told each other that some people were not intended for a life of luxury and grandeur, and that we were of their kind, heartily agreeing that we were now in our proper sphere.

Dear little Mrs. Tipper was a bright example of content and happiness. Never had I seen her at such advantage as at present. Energetic and cheerful, company manners packed away with her best dresses, she was a happy little woman again, bustling about her small domain in a print-dress and large apron, and finding a new pleasure every ten minutes. There was not even the drawback of anxiety about Lillian in her mind.

She had confided to me that she had never felt quite satisfied with Arthur Trafford as a husband for her niece, though she had been afraid to trust to her own judgment in the matter, lest her want of appreciation might arise from her ignorance of society and its ways; but she quite shared my opinion as to the probability of Lillian's getting healthily over her disappointment. There was nothing to prevent her giving expression to her real sentiments about the change in her life, and Lillian had the pleasure of knowing that her aunt at least could not be said to be suffering from reverses.

"It does me real good to do it, my dear; it does indeed!" she ejaculated, when I offered to wash the tea-things for her. "It all comes so natural and handy again. Little did I think, when I packed up these and a few other things and brought them to brother's unbeknown, that I should have the pleasure of washing them again. I couldn't bear to sell them, because they were father's present to me on my wedding-day, and nobody has ever washed them but me. You wouldn't believe how fond I came to be of this one with the little chip in it, after washing it every day for thirty years. John, he used to be sitting there by the fire with his pipe," she went on, pointing to a corner, and evidently seeing in her mind's eye the old cottage home, "and telling me how things had been going on at the office in the day; and the news out of the papers—very fond of the papers, John was; and he had the reading of them when the gentlemen had done with them. And I standing here washing up the tea-things, and saying a word now and then to show him I was listening. It all comes back so plain, doesn't it?" she added, apostrophizing the cup with tearful eyes. "I can almost hear the cuckoo-clock ticking against the wall."

It was time to put in a word, which I did as gently as possible, and she was presently smiling cheerily again.

"You mustn't think I'm low-spirited, dear; no, indeed. There was nothing in those old times to make me sad; and John's in heaven. All this only reminded me, you see."

"I hope you will find Becky useful."

"That I shall, dear; she's so handy and knows about things so much, more than you might expect. It would never have done to have a fine lady, afraid of spoiling her hands, for a servant *here*, you know." Stopping a moment to open the door and call out to Becky, at work in the little scullery at the back, "You won't forget to order the currants and candied peel for the cake to-morrow, Becky. It must not be said we hadn't a bit of home-made cake when there's dripping in the house. A good thing I thought of ordering tins; but that's what I said to the young man. Leave it to me to know what is wanted in the kitchen."

"I won't forget, ma'am," called out Becky, in return.

"And, Becky"—trotting to the door again—"there's bedroom candles and soap to be thought of when the grocer comes in the morning. There would be no sense in having to send into the town when we could have it all brought. Don't forget to look at the little slate, if I'm up-stairs, to see if there's anything else wanted."

And so on, and so on, until Lillian and I at

last got her up to her bedroom, fairly tired out, but as happy as a queen.

I was rejoiced to see how much good it did Lilian to find that the dear little woman took so kindly to cottage ways.

"How much worse things might have been, Mary! How thankful I ought to be!"

"Yes, I think you ought, dearie."

She and I stood for a few moments at my bedroom window, gazing at the peaceful scene without. My room, as they already called it, was at the back of the cottage, and the window commanded a view of the woods on the one side, and the beautiful open country on the other. But we tacitly agreed to avoid sentiment; we were not strong enough for that yet. We just let the outside peace and quiet steal into our hearts, as we stood there together for a few minutes, my arm about her, and her cheek resting on my shoulder, and then bade each other good-night without any demonstration.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. TIPPER AT HOME.

THE following day I took care to find employment for Lilian which would require the use of her mind as well as her hands. Indeed, we were all as busy as bees, there being a great deal still to be done in the way of putting our little home in order. Fortunately, as it happened for us, the builder had been obliged to make the rooms larger and less formal in shape than are the generality of cottage parlors, in order to carry out the architect's design for the exterior of the building, so we had two good sitting-rooms. Our *drawing-room*—as we laughingly termed it—gave ample opportunity for the display of taste; and Mrs. Tipper had begged me to select the furniture, choose the paper for the walls, and so forth. I did my best in the way of endeavoring to make an effective background for the by no means few works of art which had arrived from Fairview, and were now to be unpacked and arranged by Lilian and me.

Mrs. Tipper had been a little disappointed at my selecting sober tints, such as French gray for the walls, etc., confessing that for her part she liked plenty of color. Indeed, the dear little woman too fondly remembered the best parlor in the little cottage at Holloway—where she informed me gay plumaged birds wandered up and down the walls amidst roses and tulips—to take kindly to more sober tints. And it required some diplomacy gracefully to decline two heavy lumps of china, supposed to represent Windsor Castle, which had been carefully preserved as relics of old times, and which were now brought forth from their beds of wool and presented as Mrs. Tipper's contribution in the way of fine art for the drawing-room mantel-piece, with the information that they had been purchased at Greenwich fair, and brought home as a surprise by "John." But I contrived to make it apparent that we already had as many ornaments as we knew what to do with; and the happy thought occurred to me to suggest that perhaps she would like to have the gifts which had been presented by her husband on the mantel-piece in her own room, at which she was fain to confess that

such had been her desire. "Only I thought you wanted a little more color in the drawing-room, you know, dears; and I should be sorry to be selfish."

But as our work progressed she acknowledged that the effect was "elegant;" though I knew that term did not mean the highest eulogy in her estimation. The dainty collection of Sèvres and Dresden, which had belonged to Lilian's mother, the pictures, few valuable books, and the roses and lilies of the chintz, imparted quite color enough to the room to satisfy us two. But it gave us enough to do to arrange it all. To the portrait of Lilian's mother, a really valuable painting, the costly work of a celebrated Academician (another extravagance of Mr. Farrar's, deplored by Marian), was of course assigned the place of honor. She must have been a very lovely woman, of the delicate, refined type of beauty, which expresses so much to certain minds, and the artist had evidently worked *con amore*. He had seen the soul beneath, and depicted what he had seen. I could well understand the thought which had suggested the simple white flowing dress and loosened hair, with no ornament save a star above the broad white brow, and which had caused him so to pose the figure as to impart the idea that it was floating upward.

I have heard that Mr. Farrar was not a little disappointed in the picture, considering the style too severe, and that he regretted not having stipulated for velvet and diamonds. But the picture had brought fresh fame to the artist; crowds of admirers gathered round the "Morning Star," as it was called, when it was on view at the Academy, though it was generally believed to be an ideal rather than a portrait. To Lilian it was a priceless treasure.

Mrs. Tipper was in the outset a little afraid lest Lilian should do too much for her strength; but she presently took my hint and objected no more. I kept Lilian at work with me until we were both too fairly tired out to be able to indulge in any sentimental regrets. Two or three days passed thus, hammering and nailing in the mornings, chintz-cover making in the afternoons, in a steady, methodical, business-like fashion, until it was evident that very soon there would be nothing left for us to do, if Mrs. Tipper and Beeky remained firm in their determination not to allow us to give them any assistance in the every-day work of the house.

When our work was at length completed, we flattered ourselves that a prettier room than the cottage parlor was not to be found in all the country round. The pictures and china, Lilian's ensel and pet books and birds, the pretty chintz furniture, and the rare flowers which found their way to us, did indeed form a very charming whole—a room which looked a great deal more like the home of a gentlewoman than did any of the rooms at Fairview, the latter being too gorgeous in the way of gilding and upholstery to be fitting receptacles for works of art.

I was not a little amused at Miss Farrar's very openly expressed astonishment, when, about a fortnight after our departure from Fairview, she found time for making the promised call upon us.

"Well!" she involuntarily exclaimed, "you have made it look pretty!" presently adding—"for a cottage, you know. I am sure you need

not mind any one coming to see you here. I shouldn't mind living here myself, I really shouldn't! I cannot think how you have contrived to make it look so *comfy* for!"

Then she a little curiously asked to be shown the rest of the house. And although all our art treasures had been gathered together in this one room, she found that the other part of the house was well and prettily furnished, an air of comfort if not of luxury pervading every nook and corner, nothing being wanting from garret to cellar.

In fact, there had been no lack of means; Mrs. Tipper had money enough and to spare for the furnishing without drawing upon Lillian's two hundred and fifty pounds received for the piano. It had turned out there were some hundreds lying in Mrs. Tipper's name at the banker's. She had not taken her brother's words so literally as he intended them to be taken, drawing barely sixty or seventy pounds a year of the two hundred which had been settled upon her; and consequently it had been left to accumulate, and, as she smilingly explained, Mr. Markham informed her there was quite a little fortune awaiting her. "So I've been saving up a fortune without knowing it, you see, dears: it isn't everybody that does that." Then, in a softer tone, "Poor Jacob would be glad to know that his generosity to me will help his child." Then seeing Lillian's color rise as she looked up with tear-dimmed eyes at her mother's portrait, and perhaps perceiving something of the thought which occasioned the emotion, the dear little woman went on, pleadingly, and in a low voice, "Sometimes I think that *her* love will plead for him. I am sure that his love and kindness to his sister will."

Marian peeped in everywhere, and even found a gracious word for Becky, though I am sorry to say it was most ungraciously received. I do not wish to lower Becky in the eyes of my readers, and therefore I will only say that for a few moments she returned to the manners of *court life*, in replying to Miss Farrar's gracious little speech.

"What a deal it must have cost!" again and again ejaculated Marian. "And how hard you must have worked to get it to look like this!"

"It has amused us," I smilingly replied.

"And a piano, too!"

"Yes; that made its appearance yesterday; a present from an unknown friend," adding, a little mischievously, for in truth I more than guessed that friend to be Robert Wentworth, "Was it a kind thought of yours, Miss Farrar?"

She was obliged to confess that it was not; though she did not omit to imply that she considered she had already done enough, and more than enough, in the way of "kind thoughts." Lillian's quiet, self-contained bearing seemed not a little to astonish her. She had, I fancy, expected to find her in a lachrymose state. So at a loss was she to account for it, that she presently asked me in a whisper whether we had had a visit from Mr. Trafford. I replied in the negative; and in her satisfaction she was so far off her guard as to say, "Caroline said he hadn't been." And she turned to Lillian again, more gracious than ever.

She really meant to be kind, and looked disappointed as well as surprised at Lillian's persistent refusal to go to stay at Fairview, though she

had had time to feel the difference between her former home and the cottage.

"But you really must not bury yourself in this small place; and it would be so nice for you, you know, having drives and all that. And there's your horse—I won't sell it, if you would like to ride again. I wish I wasn't so frightened of horses. Caroline says I should look splendid in a habit."

"I should not care to ride now, thank you."

"But you must come and stay. We are going to have all sorts of gayeties by-and-by; as soon as the new servants are in training. Caroline knows lots of great people; and we will have dinners, and balls, and fêtes, and all sorts of things. Of course you must come."

"No; you are very kind—I am sure you mean to be kind—but I could not. I do not care for such things. I prefer the cottage and cottage life," gently but decidedly returned Lillian.

But that was quite beyond Marian's comprehension. She was convinced that there was some other cause for the refusal. It was impossible to really prefer living in a small cottage. After a few moments' reflection, she said,

"You are not annoyed about Caroline being with me, are you? You know you all left me alone, and—"

"Annoyed? No, indeed!" very decidedly replied Lillian. "Why should I be?"

"Well, of course it's rather awkward your having broken it off with Mr.—Trafford; Caroline says you have now quite?" with a keen, questioning glance.

Lillian made no reply. She had indeed done nothing toward the "breaking off," only tacitly submitted to it.

After waiting a few moments, and waiting in vain, Marian went on,

"But if you do not care about having him now, I don't see why you should object to meeting him occasionally. Indeed, I do not know how I can forbid him to come to Fairview. There can be no objection to his coming to see his sister sometimes."

"I do not see any," quietly returned Lillian.

Whereat Marian looked very much relieved, and became so extremely gracious and affectionate toward us that Mrs. Tipper, who had not been noticed much of late, was taken into favor again.

"And I shall expect to see you, too, aunt. I know you do not care for company; but you might come on the quiet days, when we are *quite* alone. I will let you know the first leisure—"

"You must excuse me," put in Mrs. Tipper, with gentle dignity; "I have given up visiting. I may make an occasional call; but, like Lillian, I very much prefer my present humble home to Fairview—now."

"It's very good of you to bear it so well, I'm sure; but you can't *really* prefer it, I think. Besides, you are my real aunt now, you know; and if you don't come it will look as if—"

"You must excuse me if I sometimes forget our relationship, Miss Marian" (never could Mrs. Tipper be induced to give her the name of Farrar). "My Lillian is the only niece I have known until very recently, and my love was all given to her long ago."

But *one* thing had put Marian into a good-humor with herself and us, and she was not to be

discouraged. I think she good-naturedly made allowance for us, as disappointed and soured people, from whom a little ungraciousness might cheerfully be borne by one so much more fortunate. So she took leave of us in the pleasantest way, and with a pretty wonder at our philosophy under difficulties, which proved that she had already become an apt pupil of Mrs. Chichester's.

Aided by a natural self-complacency and obtuseness, and disturbed by no misgiving respecting her own powers, she would probably very soon become as perfect a specimen of fine-ladyhood as she could desire to be. The difference between a fine lady and a gentlewoman would never be perceived by Miss Farrar.

One return visit we decided that it was necessary to force ourselves to pay. We felt that much was only right and proper, if only to evince that we harbored no unkindliness toward the new mistress of Fairview. But it was not pleasant to anticipate; and in our desire to get it over, we were as prompt as Miss Farrar could desire in returning her call, setting forth for Fairview the next day. Could she have heard us comforting and sustaining each other by the way, she would probably have been less flattered.

We were admitted and ushered into the drawing-room by a strange servant in very gorgeous livery. It was to be a greater trial for poor Lillian than I had expected. I do not think that either of us had calculated upon the possibility of finding Arthur Trafford upon familiar terms at Fairview at so early a date as this after Lillian's departure. But there he was; and as Marian was singing at the top of her voice when we were ushered into the room, we had a momentary picture of them as they certainly would not have chosen us to see them; her eyes being raised to his, and his bent upon hers, with all the *empressment* of lovers, before they became conscious of our presence. Mrs. Chichester was seated at a sufficient distance, near one of the open windows, apparently deeply immersed in the subject treated in a book she was reading.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Marian, rising hastily from the music-stool as she caught sight of us.

Lillian shrunk back a moment, and for that moment I contrived to screen her from observation. Fortunately the others were too much confused at being so discovered to notice how we bore ourselves; and Lillian very quickly recovered herself again, and advanced toward Marian. Presently we were all shaking hands and saying the right thing for the occasion.

Marian was extremely effusive about our goodness in coming "so very soon;" partly, I fancied, to conceal a little embarrassment which she had the grace to feel. "We did not expect you to be quite so good as this, you know, dear!" she ejaculated, kissing Lillian.

Arthur Trafford was the least at ease. When the rest of us had contrived to assume an everyday tone and manner, he seemed to be growing still more confused and conscious. It was certainly rather embarrassing for a man so desirous as he of others' good opinion to be found thus—assuming the attitude of a lover toward Marian Farrar by the girl whom he had deserted, and so soon after that desertion. The motive was too palpable to be glossed over by any amount

of sophistry. To add to his misery, he still loved the girl he had deserted.

The sight of Lillian's white face and grave eyes—the traces of the storm which had swept over her—was too much for him. He stood gazing at her with miserable, yearning eyes; and when she presently addressed a few words to him with reference to a book of his to which Marian had drawn her attention, thanking him for the loan of it, and asking him to excuse her having, in the hurry of leaving Fairview, forgotten to return it, he could endure the torture no longer.

Hurriedly thrusting aside his sister, who had perceived something of what was going on in his mind and was coming to the rescue, he went out of one of the windows opening to the ground, and we saw him striding down one of the garden paths, as though his only object was to get out of sight as quickly as possible.

Marian looked uneasy as well as annoyed; and watched Lillian more closely, not a little astonished, I think, at her self-possession. There was an awkward silence for a few moments, until Mrs. Chichester came to the rescue and steered us into the shallows again, making talk about nothing, in easy society fashion, until we had all recovered our equilibrium.

Dear little Mrs. Tipper came out grandly again: no longer attempting anything in the way of company manners, they saw her as she was, a single-minded, true-hearted woman, with a great deal of natural dignity and self-respect. Utterly disregarding Marian's shocked looks and Mrs. Chichester's half-suppressed smiles, she talked about her cottage home and new life with very unmistakable thankfulness for the change which had come about, so far as she was concerned. They had led to it by their compassionate tone, and they could not doubt the sincerity of her replies.

"You mean to be kind, no doubt, ma'am," in reply to one of Mrs. Chichester's polite little speeches; "but I assure you that as for myself I am more happy and comfortable at the cottage than I have been for many a long day. I was not brought up like gentlefolks, and their ways never came easy to me. My father was a greengrocer, and a very good father he was—I am proud of my father, Mrs. Chichester—and though he could not make his children like rich people's children, he taught us not to be ashamed of being what we were. If you don't like your station in life, get out of it as soon as you like; but don't be ashamed of it while you are in it. That is what father used to say; and there was not a tradesman in Camberwell more respected than father was. Jacob worked his way up in the world; but by the time he had got rich it was too late to make me any different." Smiling at Mrs. Chichester's graceful little protest, she cheerfully went on, "We have none of us been brought up like gentlefolks; and we can't help its showing. Why, any one might see that Lillian is a lady, like her mother before her, and different from such as us, you know," with a confidential nod toward Marian. "I once thought that learning French and the piano would do it; but I know better now."

Marian drew herself up with a few murmured words to the effect that the mistress of Fairview was quite equal to the position she found herself

in. But it was of no avail. She was not a gentlewoman in Mrs. Tipper's eyes; and Mrs. Chichester herself was but a poor imitation of one.

"It is not, I think, usual to find—Camberwell so ready to recognize the claims of birth, Mrs. Tipper," said Mrs. Chichester, with the extreme softness which generally accompanied such little speeches from her lips. "Blue blood is not supposed to reign there."

"I was not talking about blue blood, ma'am," returned Mrs. Tipper, complacently regarding her; "Lilian's mother was a gentlewoman;" at which Marian, who had taken offense at Mrs. Chichester's remark on her own account, gave it as her opinion that "blue" blood was all nonsense, and she had never believed in it.

I sat silent, admiring the way in which Mrs. Tipper and Lilian showed their ability to hold their own. Mrs. Chichester was inclined to be loftily condescending toward me; but as I met her with smiling cheerfulness, showing no sign of being aware of my inferiority, the conversation soon languished between us.

Marian did her very best to be kind and conciliatory toward Lilian. "Now you have broken the ice, you will come very often, I hope, dear. It is rather a fatiguing walk up the hill, but there's the carriage always at your service. Of course you will let me send you back now," going toward the bell as we rose to take leave. "What I should do without a carriage I really don't know," she added, languidly.

We hurriedly declined the carriage, each very decidedly affirming a predilection for walking exercise; and, finding that we were really in earnest, she reluctantly allowed us to depart as we came.

"There, it is over; and we need not go again for ever so long, I am thankful to say!" ejaculated Mrs. Tipper, with a sigh of relief, as we turned homeward.

CHAPTER XXI.

OUR EXPERIMENT.

I WATCHED Lilian very anxiously for a few days after our visit to Fairview. But although it had given her a shock to find Arthur Trafford already upon such familiar terms there, while there had been no call at the cottage, nor even a message sent to inquire after our well-being, she was not permanently depressed in consequence. I must do Arthur Trafford the justice to say that I think he was ashamed of sending conventional messages under the circumstances, and felt that, bad as silence was, it was in better taste than meaningless words. Nevertheless, his sister might have contrived a call, had she possessed the something besides blue blood, which, in dear Mrs. Tipper's estimation, constitutes a gentlewoman, sufficiently to recollect past kindness and act up to her former rôle of being Lilian's friend. Fortunately, Lilian did not depend upon her friendship.

"Do not fear for me, Mary," she whispered, rightly interpreting my anxious looks.

I did not fear for her—in the long-run. I knew that in time she would come to be even ashamed of having given the name of love to her

infatuation for Arthur Trafford. But to attain that end she must not be allowed to dream over the past; and I was casting about in my mind in the hope of finding some plan for employing our time which would be sufficiently interesting to absorb the attention of her mind as well as her hands. Pupils Mrs. Tipper would not hear of; nor would she allow us to render any assistance in the house-keeping, insisting that Becky and she had no more to do than they could very easily get through. Indeed, Becky worked with a will; Mrs. Tipper and she were the best of friends; and nothing would have pleased them better than keeping Lilian and me in the parlor in state, and waiting upon us.

Fortunately, we neither of us inclined to that kind of state. Lilian knew as well as I did that hers was not a nature to be nursed and petted out of a trouble. As people thoroughly in earnest generally do, we soon found a way of filling up our time—a way which had a spice of novelty and adventure in it, specially adapted to our present frame of mind.

About a mile distant, on the high-road leading from the left of the village toward the town of Grayleigh, were a few cottages which had been erected for the accommodation of the laborers upon some fruit and hop-growing grounds in the vicinity. Lilian and I had come upon them in one of our walks; and their forlorn, uncared-for aspect appealed to our sympathies, and set us thinking about the possibility of a remedy. At length an idea suggested itself to us. During the daytime, at this season of the year, they were all unoccupied but one, where dwelt an old woman, a past work, and who was, as she proudly informed us, kept out of the workhouse by her children. Through the medium of this old woman, we applied for permission to do what we could for the absent wives and mothers, in the way of making the desolate-looking hovels more like homes. There seemed some difficulty in obtaining leave. We afterward found that there had been grave deliberations as to the expediency of allowing us the freedom of the place, there being all sorts of doubts and speculations as to our motives. But after two or three visits to old Sally Dent, during which she sharply questioned and cross-questioned us, she gave us to understand that it was agreed that we might try what we could do, though I believe permission was given more out of curiosity to see what our intention was than from anything else; and she was cautious enough to inform us that they reserved to themselves the right of putting a summary stop to our visits whenever it should please them so to do. For the present, Sally Dent gave us the key of the end cottage, which was to be duly returned when what she ungraciously termed our "rummaging" was over.

"Not as you will find much to rummage at Meg Lane's," chuckled the old woman. "She ain't taken any pride in her home since she had to sell her bits of things when they were down with the fever."

It did appear rather unwarrantable to unlock the door and enter the place in the absence of the inmates, before we had even made their acquaintance; but we satisfied ourselves with the hope that the end would be found to justify the means, and the very first day we contrived to leave a pleasant indication of our intentions.

The cottage contained two rooms up-stairs, and one on the ground-floor opening to the road, with a little back scullery. We did not intrude into the upper regions, contenting ourselves with putting things into some sort of order in the little sitting-room. Perhaps I had better not describe how very real our work was, and how hopeless at first seemed the task we had undertaken. But we worked with a will, enjoying many a little jest at the idea of what Mrs. Tipper's astonishment would be if she could see us, with our sleeves tucked up, sweeping out dirty corners, when we were supposed to be taking our daily constitutional as decorous gentlemen should. Lilian devoted herself to one dirty cupboard with a pertinacity which, I gravely informed her, did equal honor to her head and heart, considering the time it would take to make any visible improvement. Four shelves filled with a heterogeneous collection of unwashed cups and saucers, bread new and stale, scraps of meat (some not too fresh), a jug coated with a thick fur of sour milk, dirty plates, mugs smelling of stale beer, bits of old pipes, and so forth, "all canopied o'er" with spiders' webs, certainly were an undertaking.

But it must not be supposed that we intended solely to employ ourselves in sweeping and cleaning: no, indeed; the little we did in that way was only intended to serve as a suggestion for others to carry out. Our ambition was to induce the people to begin to feel that they had homes, and so in time to take some little pride in keeping them neat themselves.

The small amount of money which we allowed ourselves to spend was spent in a way which might not a little surprise some people. We tried to make the little room attractive with an ornament or two, which, though inexpensive, were in good taste and pretty in shape and coloring—a primitive hanging shelf with two or three neatly bound books, a clean blind, a nicely framed print for the wall, and so forth, all new and fresh and bright; a contrast with the blackened ceiling, which we hoped would in time suggest white-wash. Then we boldly challenged our hosts, as we laughingly termed them, with a clean hearth; and after persisting two or three days, we were delighted to find that the hint was taken—that our clean hearthstone had brought about a decently brushed grate.

By this time we were presented with the key of the next cottage, together with a pressing invitation to extend the field of our operations. As days went on we began to feel a little proud of our success, such as it was, though it could not be said to have been achieved without difficulty. In the outset, all sorts of obstacles were placed in our way. It took us, for instance, some days to bring a certain dirty table to reason. After cleaning away sundry beer-stains, etc., which offended our sense of propriety, we invariably found it as dirty as ever. A more unmanageable piece of business than this obstinate old table it would be difficult to find. It really was depressing, as Lilian said, to find our efforts so entirely ignored, not to say set at naught; though of course we did not intend to yield. We tried the effect of placing a little round waiter on the table, in the hope that its use would suggest itself; but without any good result. At length I began to perceive that this was a case in which we were contending against one of the lords of

creation, and that for some reason he considered it necessary to assert his independence.

"It's old *Jemmy Rodgers* as lives with his darter," explained Sally Dent, to whom I had put a question upon the point. "He says you ain't a-doing all this for nothing—'tain't likely; and he ain't agoing to give in to the new ways till he knows for certain what's to come of it."

"I should think he might be sure no harm could come of it."

"He ain't so sure, miss. *He says*" (carefully fixing the responsibility upon *Jemmy Rodgers*) "that perhaps you only wants to make us all obligated to you, so as we can't shake you off when you comes by-and-by a-worriting about—"

"About what?" I asked, seeing that she hesitated to go on.

"Well, there; he says, most like you have got hold of some new-fangled way for saving souls, and you wants to try it on we. William Marther, he says there's all sorts of new ways a-being tried up in London. But we are old-fashioned folks, and we've got enough to do to read our Bibles and tend to what the clergyman says. He's a good, kind gentleman; and if he worrits a bit about the drink and all that, we don't mind it from he, because he shows us the texts for what he says, and there's no saying nay to *them*."

I very gravely assured her that I had no intention whatever of worriting; and that we did not, at any rate for the present, even desire to make the acquaintance of the cottagers.

"But you must have *some* reason for doing it, miss; at least *Jemmy Rodgers* ses so," said Sally Dent, eying us sharply.

"Tell *Jemmy Rodgers* that if he attended more to what Mr. Wyatt teaches, he would not be so ready to donbt others," I replied.

And leaving that to sink into *Jemmy Rodgers's* heart, we cleaned away at the table again. All to no purpose; that table represented *Jemmy Rodgers's* independence of us and our help, and we regularly found it in the same state every morning. But we made up our minds that even *Jemmy Rodgers* must have a weakness somewhere; and after a few diplomatic questions to Sally Dent, we discovered it. Once his weakness discovered, *Jemmy Rodgers* was vanquished, though it cost us five shillings to do it, and he really did not deserve to have so much spent upon him. But by-and-by, perhaps, he would understand that it was the victory only which had been paid for. A neat little bracket was placed beside the fireplace, and on it *Jemmy Rodgers* one evening found a pretty stone tobacco-jar filled with good tobacco, and a nice new pipe. Not a little curiously did we open the door the next morning. There was only one mark on the table, and that a very faint one, as a sort of feeble protest that *Jemmy Rodgers* was not to be bought; but after that we were left to our own devices; regarded, I think, as eccentric, but eccentric in a way that no one had any right to object to—something like children who had a fancy for playing at being servants.

Be that as it may, we were beginning to be rewarded in the way we most cared for. There were unmistakable signs of a disposition to keep the little homes in a more orderly state; and the delight our modest offerings in the way of ornament gave was very marked as well as suggestive.

The love which the poor display for some little possession in the way of ornament is not always, perhaps, sufficiently considered. I can only say that I have known one little thing of beauty, or even a faint and blurred image of beauty, to have a more refining influence in a cottage home than I should have expected. Wherever I have seen a cherished bit of china or what not, there I have also seen some tendency toward making the surroundings more worthy of it.

I found that our proceedings not a little puzzled Mr. Wyatt; an earnest, anxious good man, well known as a friend to the poor in all directions. He too for a time was under the impression that we might possibly be paving the way to introduce doctrinal matters, and felt it, I think, to be his duty to ascertain what these were. It was, I knew, not by chance he one morning made his appearance at the door of a cottage we happened to be at work in. I was busily engaged hammering in a nail for a picture, and did not turn my head when the sunlight streamed in through the open door-way, imagining that Lillian had re-entered, she having gone to borrow a broom from the next house.

"A more wrong-headed nail than this never existed! We must not forget nails the next time we go to Grayleigh, Lillian."

"I beg your pardon."

I turned hastily round and met the eyes of Mr. Wyatt. Descending from the chair as gracefully as might be, with due regard to its ricketiness, I offered my hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Wyatt? We are not quite strangers, I think?"

"No, indeed," he replied, looking not a little relieved. Though in the interests of his poor, he had made up his mind to find out who and what we were, he was too much a gentleman to enjoy doing it. I knew afterward that he had feared having to do battle with some lady with objectionable views and an objectionable way of advocating them; and it was therefore natural enough he should be a great deal relieved to see one of the members of his small congregation. As I have said elsewhere, Lillian and I had, in the prosperous days, preferred attending the primitive little church on the road to Grayleigh, to going to the newly built and more highly decorated church on the hill. And as the congregation consisted mostly of laboring people and the small shopkeepers in the village, it was natural that the appearance of two strangers should attract some attention, which had led to his introducing himself, and a pleasant acquaintance springing up between us.

It was this little church which the inmates of the "Home," as it was gracefully designated, attended; sitting in the organ-loft, where they were out of range of curious eyes; a consideration for which I afterward found they were indebted to Mr. Wyatt. We had frequently passed them on their road to church; and I had been painfully struck by the hopeless, not to say sullen and discontented, aspect of most of the women, as they filed slowly along, the matron's rich silks and velvets in too marked a contrast to the ugliness of her charge's attire, which I thought savored unnecessarily of prison uniform for those who were supposed to be struggling to free themselves from past associations.

Then I was disappointed that my occasional

smile and word, as we stood aside for them to pass into the porch, should be considered an offense by the matron, as it so evidently was. And I could not see why I should not offer a few violets I was carrying, which the eyes of one of the women seemed to ask for as we passed them one morning in the road.

"I am to give 'em back, miss," she exclaimed, running after me and putting them into my hand. "It's against rules, please—that is, mistress says I musn't have them."

"Well, I cannot present you with the beautiful sky, and that lark's song, and the glorious sunshine, for they are yours already; but please take my good-wishes and give me yours."

She stood gazing at me a moment, then turned away without a word and ran back.

"This," continued Mr. Wyatt, "is a surprise, Miss Haddon. I did not at all expect to find you to be one of the mysterious ladies I have of late heard so much about from the cottagers here. Is Miss—"

"Yes; Miss Maitland is the other delinquent," I smilingly replied, as he hesitated over the name, and so showed me that he knew something of what had occurred. At this moment Lillian came in, her skirts and sleeves tucked up, a handkerchief tied corner-wise over her hair, and a broom in her hand.

"We really must contrive to squeeze a better broom than this out of next week's allowance, Mary; it won't go into the corners a bit." (We had agreed to restrict ourselves to spending only so much a week upon our *protégées*, leaving the rest to our own ingenuity.) "We cannot make brooms, you know; and— Oh—"

"Mr. Wyatt, Lillian."

He gave her a low bow in return for hers, and I fancied I understood why he was a trifle more embarrassed with her than with me. Lillian had never looked more lovely than she did thus, her refined order of beauty idealizing her working-dress. The clear, deep-blue eyes, hair of *unpurchasable* gold, the soft, rosy cheeks, and white, delicately rounded arms bared to the elbow, what a charming picture it was! I do not think I would even have dispensed with the little stray black, which had perched itself at the edge of a dimple, much more effectively than anything in the way of a patch could do it. One might have imagined her the beautiful Princess who went as serving-maid in the Ogre's Castle, protected only by her goodness and innocence—all sufficient protectors in fairy tales, and more than they are always allowed to be in real life—to obtain the release of her captive father. She was so natural too, and devoid of all attempts to attract; and only sensitive as a pure, good girl, with a delicate sense of truth and honor, is sensitive.

"You have heard what we are attempting here, Mr. Wyatt?" I asked.

"Yes," slowly and awkwardly. "But I am not altogether sure that I understand your plan."

I gave him a little explanation of what our intentions were; and he listened gravely and politely, though I could see that I did not entirely succeed in proselytizing him. He was ready enough to give us credit for good intentions; but when we were bold enough to ask his opinion as to our succeeding, he acknowledged that he had not much hope of our being able to do permanent good. And when Lillian a little triumphantly

told him about our success with Jemmy Rodgers, he smilingly pointed out that that was a success which had been purchased. In truth, he confessed that he belonged to the old school, and did not take kindly to innovations.

"I do not, for example, like seeing a lady doing such work as Miss Maitland is doing for people who have quite enough time to keep their own homes clean and neat, if they would only do so, instead of going down to spend their spare hours at the village ale-house."

"But we are hoping to get them to do that, Mr. Wyatt," said Lillian. "We are trying to make the homes more attractive than the ale-houses."

"I can only hope you will succeed, Miss Maitland."

"Well, I call it a tiny bit of success to get Meg Lane, as they call her, to brighten her fire-grate and clean her window."

"Purchased," he replied, smilingly.

But I could see that he advanced his objections hesitatingly and doubtfully; and I felt that he would be ready enough to acknowledge that we were right whenever we could prove that we were, which was as much as we could expect. Moreover, he had now no fear of our attempting to disturb the faith of his flock.

We came off a great deal better with Mr. Wyatt than with the lady visitors at the cottages; though even they recognized the wisdom of non-interference, and kept aloof, paying their weekly visits in the afternoons when we had retired. Nevertheless, we quite understood that our proceedings were not approved of, had old Sally Dent not informed us that we were regarded with some suspicion. We just worked on, and did not intrude ourselves upon the residents at the cottages, not even knowing them by sight, and making a *détour* on our way to church on Sundays for the purpose of avoiding them.

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE WEAK THAN WICKED.

ROBERT WENTWORTH took good care that our time should not hang heavily upon our hands when we were at home, urging us to work, and keeping us well supplied with books, such as he had gradually got me into the habit of reading—books which required some little mental exercise for their proper appreciation. Moreover, he demanded notes, a paraphrase, or criticism, upon all we read; being very exacting about our getting thoroughly to the root of the subject treated upon, and having no mercy upon what he termed a slovenly habit of thinking.

We were much amused at the tests he gave us, and the impossibility of throwing dust in his eyes. If Lillian wrote my thoughts upon a subject, and I hers, he detected which belonged to which with an unerring readiness which proved that our minds were as open books to him. The very difference in his treatment of us when he found us flagging (bantering—not to say taunting—me, and encouraging Lillian) I now think was a proof that he knew the kind of spur we each needed. And although I believed that he was doing all this for Lillian's sake, I was none the less grateful for the benefit it was to me.

At his suggestion, Lillian was doing a little French with me, for which she gave me German; while our sketch-books were not allowed to lie entirely unused. All this, with what dear Mrs. Tipper called our long walks—she did not as yet know how our mornings were employed—sent us healthily tired each night to bed.

Robert Wentworth came down twice and sometimes three times during the week; and after we had given him a *résumé* of the work we had done in the interval, we finished the evenings with music and singing, and Lillian's voice was not her least charm. Then would come some triumph of dear Mrs. Tipper's skill in the way of little appetizing dainties for our substantial tea, and afterward Lillian and I went along the lanes with him as far as the stile which separated them from the fields, in the summer moonlight, bidding him good-night there.

It was a pleasant life, though at the time I naturally could not think it *the* pleasantest; it was merely the pleasant, peaceful prelude—the, so to speak, preparation for the fuller life to come. But, best of all, Lillian was beginning to enter into it with real enjoyment, less as a life lived from duty than from love.

"It is what I never hoped for—to see my darling get over it so well as this!" confided dear Mrs. Tipper to me.

"They cannot, at any rate, call her broken-hearted at present," was my cheerful rejoinder.

"No, indeed, dear. I shall begin now to hope that by-and-by some one more worthy of her may have a chance, and I shall yet live to see my Lillian's children about the. And you too will be thinking of getting married presently, dear?" with what I fancied was an inquiring glance.

I murmured something to the effect that perhaps my time would come, even then shrinking a little nervously from entering into details.

"Of course it will, dear; and Lillian's too. Already there is Mr. Wyatt making all sorts of excuses for finding his way to the cottage. A nice gentleman, isn't he, dear—shows what brings him so plain, too, doesn't he?"

Yes, he did show it plainly, no doubt of that. If he did not already love Lillian, he was on the very verge of it. But that was not at all in accordance with my hopes.

"You forget Mr. Wentworth," I put in, smilingly.

She looked up into my face for a moment, then bent over her knitting again, as I went on,

"I think you must have guessed what brings him so often down here, now?"

"Yes, Mary; yes, I have, dear."

"And so have I; but I suppose it's early days for talking of it yet."

"Very well, dear; you know best about that, of course. I will only say that Robert Wentworth is a great favorite of mine."

"That is because he is so good, auntie," said Lillian, who had caught the last words as she entered the room. "He is the very best and kindest friend we have known."

"The *very* best, dearie?" I asked.

She flushed to her temples; then, after a moment, repeated, in a low, clear tone,

"The very best and kindest, Mary."

I was quite satisfied. No lovelorn damsel could talk in that way. Arthur Trafford no

longer disturbed her peace. Everything was going on favorably for Robert Wentworth; and the sooner poor Mr. Wyatt was allowed to perceive the real state of the case, the better for his future peace.

Two months had glided thus pleasantly away. There was now only one shadow upon Lilian's mind, though that was an abiding one. The wrong done to the innocent mother was not likely to be forgotten by her child. It was that, and *not* the loss of her lover, which caused the soft, yearning, regretful expression that still lingered in the beautiful blue eyes.

Fortunately, we had accustomed ourselves to think of Arthur Trafford as Miss Farrar's lover, before the news reached us that it was so; and I was very proud of Lilian's calm reception of it. After that, it was easy to get over the additional information that the marriage was arranged to take place very shortly.

Marian adopted the tone—I think I know by whom it was suggested—of Arthur Trafford having been badly treated by Lilian, who had cruelly cast him off; and that made matters easier for us all. As Marian said, Lilian could not blame her for accepting one whom she herself had rejected. Nor had she had any misgivings about his love. Fortunately for her own peace, she did not suspect that Arthur Trafford's love for her was less than hers for him. And the readiness with which he had transferred his affections was interpreted in the same convenient way. "The truth is, he had not seen *me* when he engaged himself to Lilian," she confided to me in a little aside. "You knew he admired me from the very first; now, didn't you, Miss Haddon? I don't blame you *now* for being cross about his paying me such compliments when he was engaged to Lilian; he really couldn't help it, poor fellow! And I do believe that if Lilian had played her cards well, he would have acted honorably to her; he says he should. But you can't blame me for being glad things have turned out as they have, neither. Caroline says only *envious* people would blame me."

I really did not much blame her. I suppose she acted up to her perception in the matter; and I know she meant now to be good-natured. I will do her the justice to say she was honestly glad to find that Lilian showed no signs of distress at the engagement.

"If you had been miserable or disagreeable about it, I don't know what I should have done, dear," she said, with engaging confidence. "It would be like that story in the what's-its-name, you know—two sisters in love with the same man. Though I don't think—I'm *sure* I shouldn't have poisoned you. I expect I should have joined your hands, and then died of a broken heart;" sentimentally.

At which Lilian broke into a smile, and Marian was satisfied. In truth, no one could now have imagined Lilian a lovesick damsel, so improved was she in health and spirits by our present life.

Marian was very pressing with us to be present at the wedding, which was to be a very grand one, she told us.

"But I tell Caroline I sha'n't care for it a bit if Lilian won't be first bride'smaid. And it shouldn't cost you a penny, dear," she urged. "Everything of the very best, and made at Ma-

dame Michaud's, if you will only say you will come?"

But Lilian was firm; and then Marian tried the effect of her persuasive powers upon Mrs. Tipper.

"You really must, aunt. It would look worse for you to stop away than even for Lilian—my own aunt!"

But Mrs. Tipper also showed that it was not to be thought of; and Marian at length came to the conclusion that their refusal arose from their sense of the wrong done to Lilian's mother, though she was quite as much at a loss to account for that as for everything else we did.

"I don't see why you should be so put out about a thing which can't be helped." When it was thought that it was *my* ma who had been taken in, I behaved sensibly about it; and why can't Lilian and you do the same?"

Great preparations were being made for the event, and a great deal of company—"Caroline's" friends—was constantly at Fairview. Rumors reached us that the bridegroom expectant was not in very good health; indeed, it was said that the marriage was being hastened on that account, a change of climate having been recommended for a while.

I saw him once only before his marriage, and that happened by chance. Had Lilian really suffered from his desertion of her—had I felt any desire to see her avenged—I must have been satisfied. As it was, I felt almost inclined to pity him, as more weak than wicked. I do not believe that any utterly bad man would be as heartily ashamed of himself as Arthur Trafford appeared to be when he saw Lilian for the first time after his approaching marriage with "Miss Farrar" was announced.

The Fairview party were attending morning service at the little church to which Lilian and I went. I do not think that they had the slightest expectation of seeing us there; since they could not know that we should choose the long walk to that out-of-the-way little church, in preference to attending the one in the village. Most probably they went there for a drive, or perhaps to create a little sensation, which Miss Farrar was candid enough to acknowledge she had a *penchant* for doing.

They were shown into the best pew, as befitted people who had arrived in state, the old clerk himself seeing that their wants in the way of hassocks and hymn-books were duly supplied, before signing to his subordinate to cease pulling the bell, and stepping back into the vestry for Mr. Wyatt, whom he always carefully buttoned into his reading-desk before shutting himself up in his own square box beneath. How thankful I felt that although Arthur Trafford could see Lilian, she was so placed that she could not see him! I was glad, too, that he should see her thus—showing no traces of suffering from his desertion, her face blooming with the delicate rose-tint of health, and its whole expression calm and sweet and pure; while she joined in the service in a way which betokened no wandering thoughts, unconscious of the eyes bent upon her half in shame, half in regret. He was surprised, I fancied even disagreeably so, to find his loss borne so calmly as this. And though he no doubt persuaded himself that he was glad to see that his desertion

had not permanently injured her, his vanity was wounded.

It was just as well that the bride-elect had no misgivings about herself, and was too much occupied in admiring some bracelets, which I suppose she was wearing for the first time, to notice the direction which her lover's eyes took. She did not perceive us where we sat, and I contrived to whisper a few words so as to draw Lilian's attention from them, as they passed down the aisle on their way out. They had driven away before she knew that they had been there, and I was rejoiced to find that her walk home was none the less enjoyed for my telling her of it.

The following evening Lilian was seated at the piano trying a new song which Robert Wentworth had brought down with him. He was standing by her side, listening attentively and critically, stopping her every now and then to make her go over the ground again, frankly pointing out defects of style or what not, as his habit was with all we did. A glorious July evening.

"The world's comforter with weary gait
His day's hot task has ended in the west."

I was sitting at the open window, my eyes turned toward the hill-side, bathed in the glory of departing day, my mind attuned to Lilian's music, and reflecting the *couleur de rose* of the scene outside. I was indulging myself with a peep into dream-land, though a little doubtfully, and somewhat as an interloper, liable at any time to be warned off the enchanted ground, which, in my self-consciousness, I told myself youth alone has a right to enter, when my attention was attracted toward Becky, standing at the door and beckoning me out of the room.

"A letter for you, miss, just come by the evening post," she whispered, slipping it into my hand when I joined her outside. I noticed that Becky always called me aside to give me the foreign letters now, as though she intuitively felt that I should prefer to receive them when alone.

I thanked her with a look, and, hastily catching up my garden-hat, slipped by the window and out at the gate, unobserved; then hurried down the lane to read my precious letter at the stile, in the red glory of the sunset.

A letter from Philip—and what a letter! "My wife—my dear wife. At last I am setting my face homeward—"

Ah, well; I think I will tell the rest in my own words. I have been chary of quoting Philip's letters hitherto, and they shall be sacred still. Enough for me to say that his affairs were definitely settled at last. He loved me—he *did* love me—in a way which it made me humble to think of; humble, and proud and glad, with all a woman's strength and depth. Ah! Philip, for once I was satisfied for your sake; it *was* something stronger and deeper and more enduring than a girl's love awaiting you!

How tenderly he wrote about the pain which the long waiting had cost him! How tenderly he dwelt upon what he termed my unselfishness in acceding to the delay! How rejoiced he seemed to be at last able to claim me—"me," I repeated, nodding pleasantly at a wild rose peeping round the hedge. "You wouldn't imagine it, I dare say, but it is true, nevertheless."

Philip had never written like this before; nev-

er until now had it been so evident how much the long waiting had cost him. While I had sometimes tormented myself with fears lest the separation should at length have become a matter of course to him, he had been silently rebelling. I could only judge how much by the sudden revulsion—the contrast in his tone, now that the waiting was so nearly at an end.

He had made enough to satisfy us two, without any more "money-grubbing," as he termed it. He would have nearly two thousand a year when he had retired from the partnership and all was settled. We could now live the life we had dreamed of in the old times, with the gratification of knowing that we had earned it. Any time after the middle of next month he might be expected. "And you must amuse yourself in the mean time in deciding where we are to pitch our tent. Look about for a house after your own heart for us to settle down in;" and so forth, and so forth. Was ever woman so blessed? My whole being steeped in happiness, I clasped my hands upon the top bar of the stile and tried to offer up a thanksgiving. What had I done to deserve all the happiness showered upon me? What was I that I should be so blessed? But mental prayer was not enough. There was the irresistible desire to *give* as well as receive, which is experienced in all seasons of great joy. Who can love one truly without being more in sympathy with all humanity? I only know that I felt I could not bear my happiness aright until I had, so to speak, consecrated it by some act of love.

I slipped my letter into the bosom of my dress, turned down the lane which ran at right angles with that leading from the cottage, and walked swiftly on. On I went, without thinking whither, yielding to the impulse upon me, without pausing to ask myself how far I should have to go, or what I should find to do in those silent lanes. Was some subtle influence at work with me, of which at the time I was not conscious? Was some guardian spirit leading me toward an end it was not necessary for me to see? I only know that I shall never believe it was only chance which led me to a certain spot that night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NANCY DEAN.

THE moon was but just rising, and the shadows were getting deep, when I drew near to a clump of trees at the end of the long lane, as it was not inaptly called. I was a little sobered by my walk, and perhaps the least bit disappointed at having come upon no living creature for whom I might do some kindness in Philip's name. I stood hesitating a moment, not liking to go on, yet still more averse to turning back with my purpose unfulfilled, when suddenly the opportunity presented itself.

I saw something or some one moving among the trees; presently I became aware that it was a woman retreating more into the shade, as though to avoid notice. Her movements appeared so mysterious that I stood silent a moment, my pulses throbbing a little quicker than usual; then I advanced a few steps, and said,

"Have you lost your way? Can I be of any service?"

No answer.

"Can I help you in any way?"

"No."

I approached a little nearer toward the spot whence the voice issued, angry and discordant, or it sounded so to me in contrast with the solemn, peaceful stillness around.

"Do not shrink from me; I am only a woman, and, as you see, alone," I said.

"What do you want here—and what do you want with me?"

She had come out from the shadow now, and stood looking at me in the soft gray evening light, defiantly, sullenly, but a little curiously, too. I returned her gaze, and saw enough to know that if ever a human soul needed sympathy and help, this one did now.

"What do you want?" she repeated.

"I want you, and I think you want me. Thank God for bringing us together!"

She stared at me for a moment, then sullenly replied,

"I'm not one for thanking Him; and I'm not the one for such as do."

"You are the one for me," I said, answering her in her own short, decided manner, perceiving that she would bear it better than anything approaching to softness.

She uttered a little defiant laugh.

"You're a lady, and I suppose you want to play at reforming me, and all the rest of it. You all like to show off your goodness that way! But it's all been tried on me over and over again. Ladies as was so good it almost made their hair stand on end to look on me have tried, and it was all no use; they always had to give in."

"I do not mean to give in."

"Don't be too sure," adding, with another hard laugh, "Why, I was the very worst they had up there; and if they as was so perfect couldn't—"

"Let a woman who is not perfect be your friend."

"Friend! What do you mean? How can you be my friend—unless—" She shrunk back a moment, then bent eagerly forward again, gazing wildly into my face. "You must have done something wrong yourself, to make you talk like that," she whispered, hoarsely.

Of course I had done wrong many and many a time, and not at the moment perceiving her whole meaning, I quietly replied,

"Yes."

"And that brought you here to-night!" she ejaculated, adding in a low voice a vow, which seemed almost a curse, against herself if she betrayed me. "Tell me what it is you've done; and tell me how I can help you?"

"I will tell you about myself presently, and we shall be able to help each other; do not doubt it," I returned, drawing her toward a fallen tree, and getting her to sit down by my side, holding her hand fast locked in mine the while.

"You can't help me, as I can see," she musingly replied. "I've been up there for three months and more; but nothing come of it."

"Up there?" I asked, beginning now to apprehend her meaning. "Do you mean at the Home for the reception of poor women who have yielded to temptation?"

"Yes, though I never heard it put *that* way before. You need not tell me you are not one of the good ones any more. Well, I was one of the thieves they take in to reform. I'd been to jail six months; and one of the ladies on the watch for girls when they come out got hold of me, and persuaded me to go up there for a time and be made different."

"How?"—I was going to say—"kind of her!" But I saw the time had not come for that. She did not notice my interruption, and went on:

"Well, then, I run away, and got caught again, and persuaded to go back to the Home, as they call it, once more. So I made one more try. But it was no use. To-night I run away again; and I don't mind what becomes of me now. Who cares?"

"I care."

It was no use, I thought, attempting to talk of the Eternal love until she could believe in the human. Whether the fault was her own or not, I could not at this juncture tell; but one thing was plain—being "cared for" was what this woman craved more than anything besides. The misery of that half-defiant "Who cares?" appealed direct to my heart.

"How can you care for me when you have never known me?"—suspiciously. "How can that be?"

"I do not know how it can be; I only know that it *is*; and I mean to make you believe it. You are exactly the woman I was seeking to-night. I want you."

"What for? Do you really want some one to help you?" she eagerly asked, turning her wild eyes suddenly upon me again. Even the moon, which was shedding its silvery light upon us, could not soften the wild sadness of her eyes.

"Are they after you? What is it you have done?"

I placed my finger on her lips for a moment, to prevent her once more repeating the oath that she might be trusted.

"Tell me," she whispered.

I reflected a moment, then replied, "Yes, I will tell you why it was absolutely necessary to find some one like you to-night, if you will first give me a promise to be my friend afterward and let me be yours."

She promised. Then, with a trembling voice, I told her that night had brought a letter to me from my lover abroad, whom I had not seen for nearly ten years, and that in it he told me that he had at last earned enough to make us independent for the future, and that he was on his way home to marry me.

"And your trouble is that you haven't been true to him? You have gone wrong, and want to hide away, and—"

"I have been true to him, and I have nothing to hide. But—my happiness was so much more than I deserved—it was greater than I could bear, unless I could lighten some heavy heart to-night, and I shall always believe that I was led here to you."

"Are you mad?"—struggling to free herself.

But I held fast. "You promised—you promised!"

"More fool me! How can I be your friend? How can you be mine? What do you mean? Let me go!"

"No."

"You'll have to. What tie could there be between you and me?"

"Our womanhood."

"You don't know!"—with a bitter laugh. "And you're but a fine lady, after all, talking about things you don't understand."

"I am certainly not a *fine* lady. I am better off now; but I have lived upon bread-and-water as well as you have."

"Without deserving it?"—eagerly.

"I cannot say as much as that. I have not the slightest doubt I did deserve it, in one way or another. At any rate, it did me no harm whatever to go into training a little. A great deal depends upon one's way of taking things, you know."

"I can't make you out."

"Never mind about making me out. Try to trust me; do try."

"I've a good mind to trust you—in real earnest. There's something about you that makes me feel—I *should* like you to know," she said, musingly. Then, after a few moments, during which I left her undisturbed, she added, "Yes, you *shall* know; though there isn't another soul I'd tell as much to. I never took that ring at all!"

"A ring you were supposed to have taken?"

"Yes; they thought I stole it. I was in service, Miss—"

"My name is Haddon—Mary Haddon."

"And mine is Nancy Dean."

"Go on, Nancy."

"Well, I was in service, me and another young girl who was nurse-maid; and one day mistress missed a ring. I know now that Emma had the ring, and when there was a fuss about it, she slipped it into my box. She came to worse afterward, and told me the truth about it when I saw her after I left prison. *She* hadn't stolen the ring either. It was given her by mistress's son. But when one of the children said she saw her with it, and she was suspected of stealing it, she slipped it into my box rather than get Master James in trouble, never believing that my box would be searched too, and meaning to tell me about it afterward. But Master James he had a grudge against me because I hadn't been so ready to listen to his love-talk, and I think he *meant* the ring to be found in my box. I know he told Emma to put it there, and made her think he wouldn't have anything more to do with her if she confessed the truth. Besides, he threatened to deny that he had given it to her, and then she would have to go to prison instead of me. Well, I didn't say much to her then; she was a poor miserable creature already, and didn't want hard words from me to beat her down any lower."

"It was very hard for you, poor Nancy, but"—laying my hand gently on hers again—"it might have been harder. I mean, if you had really done what you were believed to have done."

"It was harder for another reason," she replied, grimly. "Wait till I've told you all. My mother lived away down in Leicestershire, a respectable shepherd's wife, who prided herself upon bringing her girls up honest and good. The first letter I got in prison came from my married sister, to tell me that my wickedness had broke mother's heart, and saying that it was no use my ever going back there again, for not

one of them would own me; and father he would never forgive me for being the death of mother. My sister had married a well-to-do farmer, and was ashamed of me, before she thought I had done wrong, for being in service; so she did not spare me afterward. A disgrace to the family, she called me, and said they one and all hoped never to see nor hear from me again. I came out of prison a desperate woman! As I just told you, when I came out of prison I was met by one of the ladies on the watch for such as me, and I was brought down to the place up there."

"You could not, at any rate, doubt *her* motive," I said, cheerfully.

A half-smile played about her lips as she went on, without noticing my interruption, "Then they begun at me. I was dressed up in them things. You've seen us parading off to church, I warrant—people never forget to stare—so you know what it is out-of-doors, walking along two and two, with the matron in front dressed up fine to show the difference! But in-doors it's worse—worse a deal than ever prison was. Mrs. Gower (that's the matron) has it all to herself, and— There; I don't think it has ever done any good to them as are as wicked as they are thought to be, and it just drove me wild. Out of fifteen of us, there wasn't many who could say they were better for being there. The sharp ones pretend to be reformed straight off; it is the only thing to do if you want to come off easy and get sent off to a situation with a character. I gave them a great deal of trouble. I knew I wasn't quite so bad as they thought me; but I didn't care about setting up for good in the way some of them did neither. So I soon got to be thought the worst character they had in the place; and then they showed me off as the bad one to the visitors—a sort of curiosity. Mrs. Gower liked to have a wicked one to show among the good ones, I think. So I began to feel a bit proud of it, and did little pranks on purpose to amuse them. There wasn't so very much harm in them neither, only they were against the rules. But to-day I was fetched in to be shown to the committee. I didn't mind them, making up a face all ready for them; and they put up their glasses to look at me, and I think they was satisfied that no place could have a wickedder one nor me to show. I was laughing to myself, when all in a moment I saw a face among them that I knew. It was my old mistress's son, who had tried so hard to make me go wrong, and then took his revenge by making me out to be a thief. The thought came into my head to tell them that he had been the cause of all my trouble. But I'd hardly begun when I was ordered to stand down as a liar as well as a thief. Of course they wasn't going to believe that a respectable gentleman like him could do anything so wicked. Besides, there was his face to look at; there wasn't a gentler and kinder-looking gentleman there than he was. And he called me 'Poor thing,' and said he hoped they wouldn't have me punished, for he did not mind—everybody knew *him*! Well, I managed to give them a bit of my mind before I was got out of the room. I could ha' borne the punishment and all that easy enough if there had been anything to come of it. But I knew it was no use; I should only get more and more hardened, as they called it; so I got out of the window of the room I was

locked up in and cut. That's my story, and the whole truth."

"Poor Nancy! The story is a very sad one; all the sadder because you do not see where you, as well as others, have been to blame."

"Do you think I stole the ring, then?"

"No; not for a moment. I believe you."

I hurriedly thought over what was the next best thing to say, so as to do justice to those who, however mistaken in their way of treating her especial case, had meant to benefit her, and at the same time be true to her. I saw what they had apparently failed to see—she *could* be touched.

"Then how have I been to blame, miss?"

"It is a private undertaking, is it not, Nancy—almost entirely supported by one lady, although managed by a committee?"

"Yes, miss; and the committee is managed by Mrs. Gower. They all do what she tells 'em; though if they knew—"

"And costs a great deal of money, does it not? I think that I have heard this lady subscribes between fifteen and eighteen hundred a year to it."

"Yes, miss; I suppose she do. They say Mrs. Gower, the matron, has two hundred a year, besides lots of perquisites," replied Nancy, a little surprised at what appeared to her the irrelevancy of the question.

"And this lady spends all that in the hope of benefiting her fellow-women! How much she must feel for them—nay, how much she must *love* them, Nancy! Think of feeling so much love for women who have done wrong as to spend all that upon the bare chance of benefiting them! In spite of their want of gratitude, too!"

There was a new, startled look in Nancy's eyes, as she murmured, in a low voice, "I never thought of that—I never thought about *her* caring."

"But she must, you know; and it must be a great grief and disappointment to her to feel that all she does is in vain. It is, you say?"

"I am afraid it is—a'most," hesitatingly began Nancy. "We've all on us been thinking about Mrs. Gower, and she's—"

"A moment, Nancy! It is quite evident that Mrs. Gower has not the same feeling toward you all which her employer has, or you would have experienced *some* good effects from it. But it is equally evident that those whom the benevolent lady is seeking to help have no gratitude toward *her*—not even gratitude enough to acknowledge her good-will toward them."

"I—never thought of *her*," repeated Nancy, more to herself than to me. "I only saw her once; a pale, thin lady, who looked so sorry—yes, she *did* look sorry, even for me, though she thought I was the worst there. If I'd only thought she cared!"—turning her eyes regretfully in the direction of the house again. Then, drawing a heavy breath, "But there, she thought it was all my wickedness! I let her think so, and—it's done now, and can't be undone. There's no hope for me now—I told you so—everything's against me."

"Nonsense! No hope, indeed! There's every hope for one with your keen sense of right and wrong, if you will only act up to it. Do you think I will ever give you up?"

"What can you do for such as me, miss?"—I was glad to see a little anxiously.

"Lots of things. Let me think a moment." Presently I went on, "There are two ways, to begin with, Nancy. One will require more moral strength and courage than the other; but you shall choose which you think best, and whichever course you take I promise to hold fast to you."

"What is it to do, miss?"—eagerly.

"One plan I propose is, for you to come at once with me to the place where I am staying, and remain there until I am married, which I shall be shortly, when you should live with me as house-maid, none but *us* two knowing anything about the past, and—"

"I choose that," she hastily began, her eyes brightening and her color rising.

"Listen a moment before you quite decide, Nancy. The other course is more difficult, I know; but I want you to decide fairly between the two. It is to go back to the Home, take your punishment, whatever it may be, and stay there, with me for your friend, until I am ready for you to come to live with me. I am quite aware it would require a great deal of courage and self-control to do that; but I think you could do it."

"Which would you like me to do best, miss?"—anxiously.

"If you succeeded in doing the more difficult thing of the two, I should of course have greater respect for you, Nancy; but I should not be less your friend for your being weak. I am not sufficiently perfect myself to insist upon perfection in my friends."

"That's it, miss; that's just where it is! If Mrs. Gower, our matron, only had some faults—ever such little ones—of her own, she might get nearer to us. It's the terrible goodness which makes it so impossible for her to understand us, and us to understand her. She seems to be always a-thinking about the great difference there is between her and us. It only makes us more spiteful against the goodness when we see how hard it makes people. Why, the bad ones are ever so much more sorry for one another, and ready to help!"

"And you judge all others—the lady who has done so much to prove her love and unselfishness, as well as every one else—by this matron. She is probably not suited to the office; but I do not see—" I paused, recognizing that it was not just then the best moment for advancing any argument in vindication of what she termed "goodness." All that would be suggested by a better experience by-and-by. So I merely added, "Whether she feels it so or not, it is very sad for Mrs. Gower to have so utterly failed in reaching your hearts as she appears to have done. But we must not forget that it is our own defects, and not hers, which are in question just now, you know, Nancy."

"I know what you mean, miss; and I'm sorry as I did not—"

"Never mind about the past. There is plenty of time before us, I hope. Which is it to be, Nancy? Will you come with me now, or go back to the Home?"

"I will go back, miss; and if you hear—"

"If I hear! Of course I shall go to see you to-morrow. You ought to know that."

She rose, looked steadily toward the Home, now darkly and sharply defined against the

moonlit sky, then turned her eyes upon my face, grasped my hand with a strong, firm grip for a moment, and walked swiftly and silently away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DEATH-BLOW.

I stood for a few moments watching my strange new acquaintance rapidly widening the distance between us, then turned thoughtfully homeward again. The story I had just heard had given me something to think of besides my own happiness. Although poor Nancy might be a little too ready to rebel, how hard things had been for her! How much did I, and all women blest as I, owe to such as Nancy! Well, there would be Philip to help me by-and-by. Surely, we two might be able to do something, I thought, my cheeks uncomfortably hot with the consciousness that the existence I had been dreaming of savored too much of ease and sunshine for two people who professed to desire the highest life. Robert Wentworth would tell me that, and so of course would Philip; and I was glad, also, to realize, as I did just then, that continued ease and sunshine would pall quite as much upon me as upon either of them. "I was not to the manner born."

I had reached the stile, and was absently stepping down on the other side of it, as I afterward found, stepping so wide of the lower step as to involve an ignominious descent, when I was gently lifted on to *terra firma* by two strong arms.

"What makes you so careless to-night?" said Robert Wentworth.

"It was stupid," I replied, realizing the position; and adding, "In truth, my thoughts were wool-gathering, and I had forgotten where I was."

"Rather an awkward moment for forgetting where you were, wasn't it?"

"No; yes—yes; of course it was stupid," I repeated.

"You are not generally so ready to plead guilty as that," he replied, smilingly. "What makes you so preternaturally meek to-night? Have you just come off second-best in a wordy war with old Jemmy Rodgers?" Bending down to get a better look into my face, he went on with quite another tone and manner, "What has happened, Mary?"

"Happened?" I repeated, hesitatingly. But why should I not tell him? I presently asked myself. He knew that Philip was expected, and that we were to be married; he knew that I loved Philip; and why should I any longer act like a foolish girl about it? So after a moment or two I went on, "That which you asked to be allowed to speak of in three months may be spoken now, if you will."

"Now!" As he echoed the word, bending to look at me again, I noticed a swift change of expression in his face—an eager, startled, yet not altogether assured look.

"Yes; I have had a letter this evening, telling me that Philip expected to be able to sail within a week or so of sending it, and he may be here any time during the next month."

"Philip!"

"Mr. Dallas. You know we are to be married."

He was silent; and after waiting a moment for a reply which came not, I grew a little conscious of the awkwardness of talking about my lover to him, and not the more pleased with him for making me feel so. A little confusedly I murmured something about having hoped that they would be friends; so many Philip had known must be scattered and lost to him during his long absence, and he was a man of all others to appreciate a friend.

Nettled by his continued silence, I went on, "If I have expected too much, you yourself are a little to blame for my doing so. You have always made me feel that I might expect something more from you than from other people."

I saw his hand tighten on the bar of the stile it rested on with a pressure which made the veins look like cords. He threw up his head and seemed to take counsel with the stars. Was it the pale moonlight which made him look so white and rigid? Had I offended him? *What* was it? Then arose a new and terrible fear in my mind. Had I misunderstood him—had he misunderstood *me*—all this time? Had I unwittingly led him to believe me a free woman, and— Was it possible that he loved me—Robert Wentworth?

Deeply pained as well as ashamed, had I not always believed and asserted that such complications are not brought about by single-minded women? I bowed my head, covering my face with my trembling hands in the bitterness of humiliation. My love for Philip had made all men seem as brothers to me, and it had never for a moment entered my head that my bearing toward them might be misconstrued. Then it must be remembered I was not like a young and attractive girl; nor had I been accustomed to receive lover-like attention. Bewildered and miserable—God forgive me if I had wronged Robert Wentworth in my blindness—I was confusedly trying to recollect what I had last said, so that I might be able to add a few words which would serve as an excuse for leaving him not too abruptly, when he at length spoke. Clear and firm his voice sounded in the stillness, though the words came slowly:

"You have not expected too much, Mary." I could not say a word; and, in my anxiety for him, still lingered. "You have not expected too much," he gently repeated. Then seeing that was not enough, he added, in the same low, measured tone, "God helping me, I will be your husband's friend, Mary."

I put out my hands, involuntarily clasping them together. I think he interpreted the gesture aright. With the old grave smile, he said,

"You must not forget you have a brother as well as a husband, you know."

"I will not; God bless you, Robert!" laying my hand for a moment on his.

He waved his hand, and without a word turned away. I tried to gather comfort from his quiet tone; tried to persuade myself that it was but a passing fancy for me, which he would very quickly get over, now he knew the truth, using all sorts of arguments to quiet my conscience. But in my inmost heart I knew that Robert Wentworth was not the man to be shaken in that way merely by a passing fancy.

Beyond measure depressed and dissatisfied with myself, I slowly and wearily made my way back toward the cottage again. Ah me! how changed was the aspect of things already! How different this still grayness to the *couleur de rose* in which I had read Philip's letter, and how different was my mental state! Was I the same person who only an hour or so previously had been telling herself that her happiness was almost too great to be borne? All my pretty pictures of the future, in which Lillian and Robert Wentworth had figured so charmingly, were destroyed. I had fully intended to take Lillian and dear old Mrs. Tipper into my confidence respecting Philip's expected arrival and my future prospects as soon as I reached the cottage; but how could I do so now? How could I talk about Philip as he ought to be talked about, with the remembrance of that set white face, upturned in the moonlight, fresh upon me? Impossible! My heart sunk at the bare thought of parading my love just then. It would be like dancing over a grave.

I could better turn my thoughts upon poor Nancy than upon my coming marriage just now. I found Lillian and her aunt at a loss to know what had become of me, and it was some little relief to be able to talk about my adventure with Nancy.

They were full of interest and sympathy, entering into my feelings upon the subject at once, and only differing from me about my allowing her to return to the Home, thinking that this was too much to expect from her. But I still thought that it was her best course; and it did me a little good to argue the point with them in the way of obliging me to use my wits.

"She was not entirely blameless," I replied. "I think she recognized that in deciding to return to the Home, when I left it to her to choose."

"But I am very glad you promised to procure a situation for her as soon as you can, Mary," said Lillian. "It seems almost too much to expect her to remain there for any length of time."

"I have no fear of being able to do that when the right time comes," I rejoined.

I was not able to be quite as candid as I wished to be, because I would not now touch upon the subject of my approaching marriage. I was consequently obliged to speak more indefinitely than I felt about obtaining a situation for Nancy.

"May I go with you to the Home, Mary? I, too, should like to say a cheering word to poor Nancy."

I very gladly acquiesced, and we agreed to set forth the following morning. I did not, as I had always hitherto done with Philip's letters, sit gloating over the contents of this last and most precious of all half through the night, finding a new, delicious meaning in every word. The remembrance of Robert Wentworth came between me and my happiness, and my letter was put away with a sigh. Disturbed and ashamed, the possibility of Philip's wife being supposed a free woman was humiliating to me. My thoughts were reflected in my dreams. I appeared to be all night wandering in hopeless search of an intangible something:

"A form without substance,
A mental mirage,
Which kindled a thirst
That it could not assuage."

I awoke feverish and unrefreshed. But Lillian and I set forth in good time to do our errand before the heat of the day; and a walk in the fresh morning air, through the prettiest of Kentish scenery, proved a very good remedy for a disturbed mind. Then I had a special reason for exerting myself to keep Lillian's thoughts from straying that morning. Her exclamation, "Already!" when we found ourselves before the gates of the Home, seemed to show that my efforts had not been thrown away. As the estate had been sold piecemeal, and very little ground had been purchased with the house, it had been thought necessary to build a wall round it. The aspect of the grand old house, surrounded thus by a mean-looking new wall, was almost pathetic, as well as out of character; and the great gates, which had once graced the entrance to a beautiful old park, looked specially out of place let into a wall some feet lower than themselves, and with their fine iron-work boarded up. We saw, too, that all the windows in view were boarded up so high as to prevent the inmates looking out.

"I really do not see how it could hurt the people to see the beautiful country," ejaculated Lillian, as we stood waiting for admittance after ringing the hanging bell. "No prison could look more dismal."

"Yes; Nancy Dean is one of the inmates here," in answer to my query, said a sullen-looking woman, in the ugliest of dresses in shape and make and color, and with her hair tucked away entirely out of sight beneath a cap uglier, if possible, than her dress. "But you can't see her. This isn't visiting-day. Wednesday, second and last in the month, two till four o'clock." Where-with the small door let into the wall by the side of the gates, which she had opened to inquire our errand, was unceremoniously slammed to.

I did not hesitate to ring again. This was Thursday, and not one of the visiting weeks. Nancy must not be left until the following Wednesday without the knowledge that I had kept my word. It was of the gravest importance that she should know that I had made inquiries, even though I could not obtain an interview with her. But I saw now that I had made a mistake in first asking for her. I hurriedly tore a leaf from my pocket-book and pencilled a few lines upon it, to the effect "that a lady much interested in the Home hoped Mrs. Gower would accord her a short interview," and had it ready by the time the woman once more opened the door.

"I wish to see Mrs. Gower, the lady-superintendent, if you please."

"Have you got an appointment with her?" she asked.

"If you give this to her, it will explain," I returned, putting the folded paper into her hand.

She coolly unfolded it, read it through, and after a moment's hesitation ungraciously made way for us to enter. Then, after relocking the gate, she left us standing just within, while she went into the house to do my bidding.

"Not a very courteous reception," said Lillian. "We ought to have inquired for the matron at first; but we can do without courtesy, if we succeed in getting our way," I returned.

It seemed that we were to get our way. The woman came toward us again. "I was to say that it is not usual for ladies to come at this

time: Mrs. Gower is always very much engaged until two o'clock, but she will see you if you will step this way."

We followed her into the house through a great hall, cold and forlorn-looking enough even at this season, divested as it was of everything in the way of furniture, and with its stone floor distressingly whitened. Then she pushed open a swing-door, led the way down a small well-carpeted passage, and ushered us into one of the cosiest of little rooms, luxuriously furnished. I had just a momentary glimpse of a lady lying back in an easy-chair, with her feet upon a hassock, reading a newspaper, a dainty luncheon, with wine, etc., on the low table at her elbow, when at the words, "The committee-room, the committee-room, of course, Downs!" we were hurriedly hustled out of the room again.

"This way, if you please," said our conductress, leading us across the forlorn-looking hall again.

But the room we were now ushered into was to my eyes more forlorn still—a long room of noble proportions, with five windows, which had once commanded the view of a beautifully wooded undulating park, but which were now faced by a brick wall only four or five feet distant. The only flowers now to be seen were the marble ones festooned about the high old-fashioned fire-places at each end of the room. It was now used as a committee-room; a long baize-covered table, a dozen or so of heavy chairs, with ink and papers and one book, representing the furniture.

I was busily altering the aspect of things, telling myself that even the committee must feel the depressing effects of such a room as this, pulling down the offending wall, training rose-trees round the windows, and so forth, when the door opened and Mrs. Gower entered. A stont, large-boned woman, between fifty and sixty years of age, severe of countenance, and expensively attired—too elaborately, I thought, for a gentleman's morning-dress.

"One of our lady patronesses, I presume?" she said, with a little half-bend as she advanced. "It is not usual for ladies to come at this early hour; but we are always prepared for inspection, and happy to show the Home, and explain our system, to ladies who may be desirous of co-operation with us."

"I am very much interested, Mrs. Gower. I do not think anything can be of more interest and importance to women than is such work as this. But I came as the friend of one of the inmates—Nancy Dean—to ask your permission for me to see her."

"Are you a subscriber to the institution, may I ask, madam?"

"No."

"Do you bring an introduction from any one who is a subscriber?"

"No; unfortunately I know no one in any way connected with the Home."

"There was a very marked change in Mrs. Gower's bearing, as she coldly observed,

"In that case, you did not, I presume, state your errand to the portress; and she was neglectful of her duty in not inquiring what it was, and giving you to understand that visitors to the inmates are only admitted upon certain days and at certain hours."

"No; she was not to blame. She told me

that I could not see Nancy until the usual visiting-days."

"Then I am quite at a loss to understand—"

"I should not have ventured to trespass upon your time if it were an ordinary case, and I could wait until the next visiting-day to communicate with Nancy, Mrs. Gower. I know, for the proper management of a place like this, it must be necessary to make rules and enforce them; but I hope you will make an exception in this case. It is of the greatest importance to her as well as to me that she should know a friend came here to see her to-day."

"A friend! That means, I presume, that you have taken up her case? I cannot suppose that you belong to her own class?"

I made a little bow serve for reply, and she very gravely went on,

"If it be so, I am sorry to be obliged to tell you that you couldn't have taken up a worse case. Dean is one of the most incorrigible characters I have had to deal with during a long experience. You are probably not aware that she is at present under discipline for bad conduct?"

"Bad conduct?" I repeated, interrogatively, a little curious to hear *her* version of the story.

"Yesterday she conducted herself in the most disgraceful way before the committee. Afterward she got through the window of the room in which she was confined and ran away. Then, I suppose in consequence of not being able to find any place of refuge, she presented herself at the gates again late last night, saying that she had returned to take the punishment for what she had done, and to try to reform. Of course the true reason is, she prefers staying here until her plans are more matured, and she can leave at her own convenience."

"May she not be sincere in her desire for reform, Mrs. Gower?"

"That is perfectly hopeless. A very short residence here would teach you the hopelessness of expecting any thorough reform in such a Dean."

"It must be very painful to you to feel that of any human creature, Mrs. Gower."

"Of course it is painful"—a trifle snappishly; "but such knowledge as, I am sorry to say, is gained here does not increase one's faith in human nature, madam. We have to face a great many unpleasant facts, and one of them is, that such women as Nancy Dean are altogether incorrigible."

"It must be very discouraging to think so."

"Nothing discourages us from doing our duty." And here Mrs. Gower very decidedly touched a hand-bell on the table.

Not appearing to notice the hint, I quietly rejoined,

"But great mistakes may be made in such cases; and I hope you will excuse my saying that I think you have been mistaken with respect to Nancy Dean, and taken her incorrigibility too much for granted."

Mrs. Gower drew herself up: if she thought it possible that she could make mistakes, she was evidently not in the habit of being told that she could. It was probably all the more unpardonable from the fact that the portress, who had noiselessly obeyed her summons, heard what passed. I had not, of course, intended her to hear it; but she must have entered so very quickly

after the bell sounded, and moved so noiselessly, that I was quite unaware of her presence until the direction which Mrs. Gower's eyes took informed me of it.

Mrs. Gower's color was a little raised as she begged to decline any further discussion upon so painful a subject with one who evidently had had no experience, and therefore could not understand it.

"But you will, I hope, oblige me so far as to let Nancy Dean know that her friend, Miss Haddon, came to see her, and will come again on the first visiting-day?" I pleaded, seeing that it was no use to press for an interview.

"I cannot promise anything of the kind," loftily returned Mrs. Gower. "Dean is under discipline, and the course of treatment I adopt will entirely depend upon her conduct while under that discipline."

"I beg—"

"I cannot promise anything." Then, somewhat irrelevantly, as it appeared to me at the moment, but as I now think for the purpose of pointing out to me that the fault lay with Nancy Dean, and not with the system, she added, glancing for a moment toward the woman, who stood with downcast eyes waiting for further orders, "This is one of our successes."

"This" appeared to my eyes but a very poor success—a very doubtful one indeed, if the low, narrow brows and heavy mouth and chin expressed anything of the character. She appeared to be quite accustomed to be so alluded to, no change in her face showing that she was in any way impressed by it. There she stood, a success. Make what you choose of it, she seemed to say, eyeing us with stolid indifference. I could not help contrasting her face with that of the "incurable" whom I had seen the night previously, so open and honest even in its passionate anger. Nevertheless, in my anxiety upon Nancy's account, I ventured to make an indirect appeal to "This."

"I am glad to hear it. Her own reformation doubtless makes her more desirous to help her fellow-women, and poor Nancy Dean so terribly needs a friend just now." Then turning again toward Mrs. Gower, I added, "I trust that you will allow Nancy Dean to be informed that I called, madam?"

I think she perceived my motive for repeating the request before the woman. She very decidedly replied,

"As I informed you just now, I cannot give any promise of the kind; and Downs knows her duty. And I must remind you that my time is valuable; I have already given you more than I can spare. Good-morning, Miss Haddon.—The gate, Downs." And, with a very slight inclination of the head, Mrs. Gower gave us our dismissal.

Lilian and I followed the woman to the gate, where I paused a moment, trying to gather from the expression of her face whether it would be of any avail to make a more direct appeal to her. It seemed useless to attempt it; one might as well hope to influence a wooden figure. As I stood hesitating, unwilling to go without making one more effort, I said a few words to Lilian, more to give myself time than anything else, but which served the end I had in view:

"I would give a good deal to get a message conveyed to poor Nancy."

A new and altogether different expression dwelt for a moment in Downs's eyes, fixed straight before her—an expression which suggested an idea to me that I had not had in using the words. In a moment I had my purse out of my pocket, and a half-sovereign between my fingers, taking care, as I noticed she did, to turn toward the open gate and away from the house.

Brighter and brighter grew the expression of her face as she said, in a low voice,

"I might perhaps just mention to Nancy Dean that you called this morning, ma'am—if that's all you want done?"

"That is all I want you to do; just to tell her that her friend Miss Haddon called, and intends to come again next visiting-day."

"Very well, ma'am; I don't mind telling her that," she returned, looking wooden and dull again, as her fingers closed over the money, once more the same sullen, unimpressible woman we had at first seen, as she closed the gates upon us.

"Oh, Mary, what a dreadful place! How could any one be expected to be better for living there?" ejaculated Lilian. "How could they select a woman like Mrs. Gower to influence her fellow-creatures?"

"There certainly appears to have been a great mistake somewhere," I thoughtfully replied. "So benevolent a scheme might surely be better carried out."

I may as well state here what came to my knowledge later—respecting the Home and its management. Mrs. Osborne, the founder, had commenced her work of benevolence without sufficient experience and knowledge of the class she wished to benefit. Like many other benevolent people, she believed that love was all that was needed for the work; and the lady she had at first engaged to act as superintendent was as enthusiastic and non-executive as herself. The consequences were disastrous; and it told much in Mrs. Osborne's favor that she had the courage to try again. Unfortunately, in her anxiety to avoid her former error, she ran into the opposite extreme. Mrs. Gower was selected from numerous other applicants on account of her having previously held office as matron of a prison, and possessing testimonials as to her special fitness for the executive department.

Accustomed to deal with the worst side of human nature, and to the enforcement of the necessarily rigid rules of prison-life, in which all must pass through one routine, Mrs. Gower had become a mere disciplinarian, treating those under her charge in the Home as though their minds were all of precisely the same pattern, and that a very bad one.

If half the stories which reached me respecting her luxurious, self-indulgent life were true, the effect upon those to whom she was supposed to be an example was undoubtedly bad. And if there were good grounds for the statement that her appointment to the office of prison matron had been to her a rise in life, it quite sufficiently accounted for the want of refinement in thought and habit which occasioned her to live too luxuriously, and deck herself in too rich clothing, for one living among women supposed to be endeavoring to strengthen themselves against yielding to temptation.

Again, good as he undoubtedly was, Mr. Wyatt, upon whom Mrs. Osborne depended for spiritual help, was not fitted for the task. He was too young, as well as too naturally timid and shy, to manage a number of women, who deceived him with the pretense of reformation when it suited their purpose better than openly laughing at him. Long afterward, he told me how terribly he used to dread his visits to the Home, and how much he was troubled at the little effect of his teachings. It took him a long time to understand that the best natures might appear to be the worst under such training as Mrs. Gower's.

That Mrs. Osborne herself was quite satisfied with the new management, it is too much to say. But although Mrs. Gower was not a woman after her own heart, past failures had rendered Mrs. Osborne distrustful of her own judgment; and she could not deny that there at least appeared to be better effects produced now than during the former management. Although there were occasional failures, which nothing could gloss over, Mrs. Gower could point to the fact that a certain number of the inmates were annually drafted into service, and, whatever became of them, they did not reappear at the Home.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE LANE.

I HAD had a motive, which I fancied she did not perceive, in asking Lillian to accompany me on my errand to the Home that morning. It was Arthur Trafford's wedding-day. Mrs. Tipper and I had done our best to keep the knowledge of it from her until it was over, and flattered ourselves that we had succeeded.

As we drew nearer home the sound of bells ringing merrily in the distance reached my ears; and in the hope of diverting her attention I talked on, apropos of anything or nothing. I fancied she was heeding, until she said, gently, "It is fortunate they have so fine a day, Mary."

"I suppose it is," I replied, ungraciously. Then I presently added, more pleasantly, "But it is even more fortunate that you can say so."

"Dear Mary, what did you expect me to say?"

I took the sweet face between my hands, and looked into the clear eyes, which did not flinch under my gaze, as she added, in a low voice, "I am not in love with another woman's husband, Mary."

No; I came to the happy conclusion that she was not: there was no cause for further anxiety upon that score. Had I only been right in my fancy about Robert Wentworth, how pleasantly might things now have arranged themselves!

Again I felt obliged to postpone telling Lillian about my coming happiness. It had seemed difficult to talk of my engagement the night before; how much more so now—on Arthur Trafford's wedding-day! I must still wait for a more fitting season, I told myself.

Mrs. Tipper had done her best to make the little parlor appear as cheerful and home-like as possible for our reception, and I saw that she watched Lillian with loving anxiety. She had prepared quite a feast for our favorite meal that day. If hot cakes and everything else the dear

little woman could think of in the way of dainties had been remedies for disappointed love, Lillian might have owed her recovery to them, so plentifully were they provided. She had the comfort of seeing her niece partake of the good things with an appetite which quite set her mind at rest.

If it really cost Lillian something so to gratify her aunt, I believe it was very little. She showed, too, that her thoughts had not been absent during our morning's work, by joining very earnestly in my narration of what had taken place, and giving a very decided opinion about Mrs. Gower. Before we bade each other good-night, Lillian had succeeded in satisfying Mrs. Tipper, as she had satisfied me, that she was "not in love with another woman's husband."

As days passed on my news remained still untold. Something seemed always to be intervening to cause me to put off the telling it until the morrow. Looking back, I see how very slight were some of the causes which I allowed to prevent me from opening my heart to my companions, although at the time they appeared sufficient.

Meantime we were occupied from morning till night, Lillian and I working together as with one mind. But we presently began to miss our master, as Lillian laughingly termed him, and I grew more than anxious as the days he had accustomed us to expect him passed without any sign from him. Not once had we heard from or seen him since that never-to-be-forgotten night. Did he really blame me? Could he not forgive me? I tormented myself with all sorts of doubts and fears, in my heart of hearts dreading something even worse than his blame or anger. Robert Wentworth was not the man either to judge harshly or to be unforgiving.

It was nearly a fortnight since we had seen him, when one evening Becky mysteriously beckoned me out of the room. Lillian was playing one of our favorite sonatas, and I made my escape unobserved.

"Another letter, Becky?" I asked, putting out my hand for it with a smile.

"No, miss; it's a woman this time," returned Becky. "She says that she wants to see you alone, and she won't come in. I was to tell you she's waiting down at the end of the lane, and to be sure to say you are to go by yourself."

"What kind of woman is she, Becky?" I asked, my thoughts at once reverting to Nancy Dean.

"A more disagreeable one I never see," very decidedly returned Becky. "And as to behavior, she seemed just ready to snap my nose off when I asked what name I should tell you. 'No name at all,' she said."

"I will go, Becky."

"Poor Nancy!" was my mental ejaculation; "she has got into trouble again. It was perhaps too much to expect her to remain with people who believe her to be so much worse than she really is, just when she needs to be encouraged and strengthened." I was stepping from the porch, when Becky earnestly pleaded for permission to accompany me.

"Do, please, let me come too, Miss Haddon, dear!" she whispered. "I could stand a little way off, so as not to hear; and if she touches you—"

"She will not hurt me, Becky. Do not fear it. I know who she is."

Becky stood aside, silenced if not convinced. I went out into the summer-scented air, and, just pausing by the way to gather a rose for Nancy, passed on down the lane.

Not the slightest doubt as to whom I should see for a moment crossed my mind. My surprise was all the greater when I came in sight of a woman standing erect by the stile with her arms folded across her chest, who, a moment's glance told me, was not at all like Nancy—a tall, thin woman, dressed in a long old-fashioned cloak, and what used to be termed a coal-scuttle bonnet.

Quite taken by surprise, I paused a moment to reconnoitre before advancing farther. She turned her face toward me, and although I did not immediately recognize who she was, I knew that I had seen her before.

"Do you wish to speak to me? I am Miss Haddon."

"Yes; I know you are."

Then it flashed upon me who she was.

"You are Mr. Wentworth's house-keeper?"

"Yes."

My heart sunk with a foreboding of some evil, and for a moment I could not utter a word. Then screwing up my courage, I asked, in as matter-of-course a tone as I could assume, "He is quite well, I hope?"

"Nobody cares whether he's ill or well, I expect."

"You are very much mistaken," I replied, in some agitation. "Every one who knows him would care a great deal. You ought to know that they would."

I suppose my face and tone satisfied her that I was so far saying what I thought, though she only shifted her ground of offense in consequence.

"If he was ill, he wouldn't be wanting people's pity."

"But I hope— Is he ill?"

"Why should he be ill?" she rejoined, angrily. Then, endeavoring to command herself, she went on, "But I haven't come here to talk about that. Ill or well, he doesn't know I've come here, and would be very angry if he did: you must please to recollect that. I should have been here before, but it took me two days, putting this and that together, to find out where you live. You are living with the ladies at the cottage down there?"

"Yes."

"Well, that can't be much of a place; but I suppose situations are not so plentiful, and anything is better than—"

"What is it you have come to say to me?" I asked, shortly.

"You are very masterful, and know how to get your way when you want it. You two are a match for each other; and I knew you would find that out. I knew no good would come of it when I let you get the better of me that day; and I'd sooner do anything than come to you now. You may be sure of that."

"I know that for some foolish reason you took a prejudice against me; but being disliked before one is known ought not to distress one, though I should prefer not being disliked."

"If you're not hurt, you needn't complain,"

she replied, as though determined not to yield an inch.

"What have you come to say to me?" I repeated. "I suppose you did not come all this way to remind me that you are prejudiced against me?"

"No." She looked over the hedge and around in all directions before continuing; then said, in a low voice, "You thought my master's looked but a poor place for a gentleman born to live in that day. I saw how sharp you was to notice, and how poor and shabby you thought it all was."

"You are too ready to ascribe thoughts to me," I replied.

"But you did now, didn't you? You can't say that you didn't think things looked a bit poor?"

"Mr. Wentworth can afford to be more careless about appearances than can most people," I said, not in the least comprehending her drift.

"It was all well enough for a bachelor's home."

"Ay, well enough for a bachelor's home, perhaps; but not for a married couple, eh?"

"Really!"

"Try to keep your temper for another five minutes if you please, miss. I know there's no love lost between us two; but I've come here because I've got something to say; and, proud and masterful as you are, I know you are the sort to be trusted, and I'm going to trust you. I carried Master Robert in my arms when he was a baby, and I know him and love him more than any fine madam ever can. He was left very poor, and he worked very hard, and a better master or kinder gentleman— But that's not what I've come to say; nobody will ever know his goodness as I do"—jealously. "He was poor, and I was poor, and I've had some ado to keep things together for him. But about three years ago my brother died, and things changed for me. He was a small farmer down in Gloucestershire, and everybody called him a miser; but it is not for me to complain of his scraping and saving, for he left all he had to me, and a nice little nest-egg it turned out to be. It's been down in my will for Master Robert from the first day I had it, and it has been 'cumulating ever since; not a penny of it have I ever touched. The pleasure has been to think that there it was all ready for him, though I was too proud to see how much he liked working his way up in the world to tell him about it before he wanted it."

"I am sincerely glad to know he has so faithful a friend," I said, holding out my hand to her.

"Wait a bit, miss; let me say my say. Tomorrow morning that money will be made over to Master Robert, and he will be told that he'll never see no more of me if he won't take it; and the lawyer he says it brings in pretty nigh ninety pounds a year, now!"—pausing a moment to give me time to recover that.

What could I say? Growing hot and confused and pained as her meaning began to dawn upon me, I murmured, "It is a good sum—and—"

"And that's not all," she said, eagerly. "You must remember Master Robert is getting on now, and being talked about. I've brought this paper down with me, that you might see his name in it for yourself"—taking a newspaper from her pocket, hastily unfolding it, and pointing out, with trembling finger, a short but eulogistic notice of a pamphlet by R. Wentworth. "There's

no gainsaying that, you know." Slipping it into her pocket again, she earnestly went on, laying her hand upon my arm, and seeing only him in her increased anxiety, "I don't say that prudence isn't a good thing; I'm not for foolish marriages when there's nothing to depend on; but there's the ninety pounds a year, and what he earns, besides a house to live in, and my services for nothing; and master says my bark's worse than my bite. Bless you, *his* wife's no call to be afraid of me!"

"Hush, pray hush!" I murmured, seeing all her meaning now. "Do you think any one who loved Robert Wentworth would care about all that?"

"Then it is that he isn't loved? God help him!" The cold, hard, set look came into her face again—though she would seem cold and hard now to me never again—and she folded her cloak about her.

"Will you tell me how Mr. Wentworth is?" I could not help asking.

"Oh, he's well enough; nobody need think he's going to die of a broken heart. And you must please to remember that he knows nothing about my coming here, ma'am. And perhaps it isn't *too* much to ask you not to mention what a foolish old woman has been talking about?"

"I should be as much grieved as you could possibly be for him to know anything about it, Hester," I replied, in all sincerity.

"Then I wish you good-night, miss."

"Will not you shake hands with me?"

"I'm never much for shaking hands, miss, thank you," stiffly, both hands folded in her cloak.

"Not for your master's sake? Mr. Wentworth is my friend, and I think he would be sorry—"

"He can't be sorry about what he doesn't know."

"Well, you cannot prevent my respecting you, and that I shall do as long as I live."

She went on down the lane, and I turned away, burying my face in my hands. Could I ever forgive myself?

Something—for a moment I thought it was a falling leaf—lightly touched my arm, and looking round I saw a large bony hand put from behind. I clasped it without a word; without a word it was withdrawn, and I presently found myself alone. I turned and walked slowly and thoughtfully homeward. How completely, though unconsciously, she had shown me her motive for seeking an interview with me! She had divined that her master had had a disappointment, and must have drawn the conclusion that he had been refused solely from prudential motives. Consequently she had come for the purpose of giving me a better knowledge of his prospects than he himself could have done, and was ready for his sake to try to overcome her prejudice against me. Nevertheless, my interview with old Hester tended to make me more rather than less anxious respecting her master.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PREPARATION.

GREAT was my relief the next day when, on Lilian and I returning from a ramble in our beloved woods, we heard Robert Wentworth talking to Mrs. Tipper in the parlor. But at first sight of him I shrunk back. How altered he looked, how terribly altered since we had last met! The kind little lady's hurried explanation as we entered the room, that illness had kept him away, gave me another blow, and he saw that it did.

"Only a sort of cold," he cheerfully explained, extending his hand toward me with a smile.

"How do you do, Mary?"

My own hand shook; but he kept it long enough in his own to steady it, giving me a reassuring look before releasing it.

But Lilian could not get over the shock which the first sight of him had given her, involuntarily exclaiming, "But I fear you have been ill—very ill; and it has made you quite—" She paused, not liking to go on; but he lightly replied, "Gray, do you mean? My dear Lilian, the gray season had set in long ago, only you saw me too frequently to notice it."

Mrs. Tipper laid her hand for a moment on his shoulder as she passed him on her way out of the room to prepare some special dainty to tempt him at tea-time; and I noticed that she was looking much graver than usual.

"And how have you been going on with your work during my absence?" he asked; "not carelessly, I hope? I am in the humor to be very exacting and critical to-night, so you must not expect me to treat sins of omission or commission with my usual amiability."

"Amiability, indeed!" ejaculated Lilian. "The idea of your setting up for being amiable! I do not consider you at all considerate and good-natured to failure, sir."

He smiled. "I certainly have not much sympathy with failure; it would not be orthodox, you know. But get out your work, and let me find a safe outlet for my savage propensity."

He saw that it did me good to be taken to task in the old fashion, and was quite as unsparing as I could desire, when he came upon any error of mine. Whatever it cost him, Robert Wentworth succeeded in setting my heart as well as theirs at rest before he took his departure that night. If Mrs. Tipper saw something of the truth, she showed her consideration for me by carefully avoiding to give any expression to her thoughts. Lilian evidently guessed nothing. She openly expressed her surprise and regret at the alteration which she perceived in him.

"I really felt quite shocked for the first few moments," she said. "Even serious illness does not seem quite to account for such an alteration as there is in him. He looks as though he had suddenly grown old. Do not you think so, auntie? Don't you, Mary?"

Mrs. Tipper was silent, leaving me to reply, though I knew that she was watching me somewhat closely the while. It required all the nerve and self-command I could muster to make something like a suitable reply, but I did make it; and Lilian, at any rate, remained in ignorance of the true state of the case, although her ignorance occasioned me almost as much pain as her knowl-

edge of it would have done, so very closely did she sometimes approach to the truth, in her speculations as to the possible and probable cause of the change which had taken place in Robert Wentworth.

I was becoming restless and anxious from more causes than one. The time of Philip's expected arrival was drawing near, and my news remained still untold. While I was ashamed of my reticence with two such friends, the difficulty of approaching the subject seemed rather to increase than diminish. My uneasiness was becoming apparent too; even Lillian and Mrs. Tipper were beginning to notice a difference in me which they could not account for.

The dear little lady once ventured a few words to me to the effect that no good man could be the worse for loving a woman, though she could not return his love, fancying, I believe, that possibly I was uneasy upon Robert Wentworth's account. I could only kiss the hand laid so lovingly upon mine.

It so happened that just at this juncture Mrs. Tipper required sundry little house-keeping errands done in town; and partly to be alone a few hours, partly to do a little shopping for myself, I volunteered to go for her.

"Are you sure you would prefer going, dear Mary?" said Mrs. Tipper, anxiously. "The days are so hot, and the things could be sent down, if we write, you know."

I murmured something about wanting to replenish my wardrobe a little, and she easily acquiesced: "To tell the truth, my dear, I *should* prefer your choosing the patty-pans," she candidly allowed, when she found I really wished to go. "Becky and I will think over all we require, and make a list," she added, trotting off in high feather to compare notes with Becky in the kitchen. If we were proud of our "drawing-room," Mrs. Tipper was quite as proud of her kitchen. "There is a place for everything and everything in its place, my dear, clean and ready to hand." Becky in the evening, seated in state, surrounded by her brilliantly burnished tins, was a sight to behold. Nothing would have delighted her mistress and herself more than a sudden invasion of company as a test of their resources. Lillian and I were sometimes taxed beyond our powers in our endeavors to show our appreciation of the little dainty cakes, patties, etc., set before us. Indeed, we had more than once consulted together upon the advisability of suggesting a party of children from the village to relieve us.

Lillian looked, I thought, a little surprised at not being invited to accompany me on my expedition to town. But if she was surprised, she was not offended; sensitive as she was, there was as little self-love in Lillian as it is possible for any human being to have. Hers was not fine-weather friendship. She was content to stand quietly aside until I should need her, without any complaints about being neglected, or what not, which half-hearted people are so apt to make at a fancied slight. She knew that I loved her, and I knew that she loved me, and we could trust each other, without the repeated assurance of it which some people seem to require.

She was only a shade or two more tender and loving in bidding me good-bye, when I set forth in the morning, anxious to make me feel that

my return would be eagerly looked for; and whispering a little jest about the necessity for bringing back a good appetite. "Auntie and Becky will be sure to be busily engaged in preparing treats all day, you know; so you must come home hungry, whatever you do. And do not forget your promise to buy a pretty bonnet, Mary, and leave off that old dowdy thing: it makes you look as though nobody loved you, which is not fair to your sister Lillian. And oh, Mary, I had almost forgotten! If you bring any of this back, I shall say you don't care for me in real earnest," pressing a little roll of paper into my hand.

I knew that she was genuinely disappointed when I proved to her that I had as much as five-and-twenty pounds in hand, and so I was obliged to promise to take from her store for my next need. "Or else one may just as well not be a sister," she said, with a discontented little shake of the head.

How cheering it was—how precious the knowledge that I was cared for in this way! And there was dear old Mrs. Tipper, too! I thought I knew why she was desirous just at that season to make me feel that my presence was so much required at the cottage.

"I wanted to ask you to ent on the little pin-afores for Mercy Green's child, Mary, but they must wait till to-morrow, I suppose. And there's the curtains for my bed, dear; nobody would fit them to please me but you;" and so forth, and so forth, until the last moment, when Lillian accompanied me as far as the stile.

As I walked across the fields in that lovely August morning, while the bright sun was

"Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,"

my thoughts attuned themselves to the summer sights and sounds, and I shook off the morbid doubts and fears which had so beset me of late. I resolved to be no longer so weak and unfriendly as to keep the truth from Mrs. Tipper and Lillian. It really was unfriendly not to tell them what I knew they would both be glad to hear. That very evening my secret should be told, and I would at once begin brushing up for Philip, making up my mind to overcome my shyness for finery, and render myself as attractive as possible within the compass of—five-and-twenty pounds. It appeared to me a very large sum to spend at once upon finery, and I could only hope the end would justify the means. As it chanced, I really knew very little about Philip's taste in such matters. The selection of the modest outfit which was purchased for me nine years ago I had been only too glad to leave to my dear mother's judgment, and we had been neither of us inclined to trouble Philip with *chif-fon* talk.

But I told myself that I really must make a beginning now, as I stood in the milliner's show-room, somewhat dolefully contrasting my appearance with that of the elegant-looking beings around me, wondering whether Philip would wish me to look like them, and in that case whether it would be possible to make me do so.

I had been striving so earnestly and anxiously to make myself worthy to be his companion, and it had seemed of so little consequence what I looked like during his absence, beyond being

CHAPTER XXVII.

PHILIP.

attired with the dainty neatness befitting a gentlewoman, that I now appeared quite behind the times. I suddenly began to realize that I had carried my disregard of pretty things too far, and was seized with a desire to try what extraneous aid could do for me.

I anxiously studied my face and figure in the large glass, and then those of the obliging shopwoman, who displayed an endless assortment of pretty things for my selection. She was about my own age, and possessed no greater natural advantages than I myself could boast of; and yet how very different was the general effect of her appearance! how dowdy I looked beside her! Yes, Lillian was quite right—"dowdy" was the proper word for me, from head to foot.

A little shyly and consciously, I ventured out of my shell, and appealed to the shopwoman for assistance, taking her so far into my confidence as to confess a desire to be modernized and made more attractive.

She displayed more interest in the matter than I had ventured to hope for, and we gravely discussed my capability of improvement. But I found that the complications would be so many, and the changes in the way of adaptation of hair, figure, etc., so endless, that I presently began to grow very impatient; and when she said something about the possibility of the present fashion only lasting another two months, I gave it up in despair. If I were quite sure it would serve for the rest of my life, I would go through it all; but for the fashion of an hour—no! I would be content with a simply-made dress or two, and depend upon my own taste for the finishing touches.

Some of my mother's old point, and a crimson bow or two for the pretty gray dress, and amber with the black silk, and so forth, I trusted might please Philip's artistic taste as well as though I were in the latest fashion. And I pleased myself with the remembrance that he used to admire my method of dressing my hair in large coils round a comb, saying that it suited my head and Spanish style of face. "Spanish! Yes, that certainly was the word," I told myself, dwelling pleasantly upon the one only compliment I could recollect having received from Philip.

I tried to satisfy myself this way; nevertheless, I was a little out of spirits at finding myself so different from other women whom I met as I walked through the park on my way to the railway-station, and whom I scanned with curious, critical eyes, trying to understand the intricacies of their toilets, and failing to obtain anything more than a general impression that the *tout ensemble* was very effective. The home dress might be compassed; but how if it turned out that Philip wished his wife to look picturesque and attractive out-of-doors—not in Mrs. Trafford's style, but in Lillian's more refined way of being in the mode?

I would take Lillian into my confidence at once, and she would help me. That very night I had determined to make the truth known to her and to Mrs. Tipper; and after it was once known, the dress question could be entered upon.

I ARRIVED at the Grayleigh Station about seven o'clock in the evening, and walked slowly and enjoyably across the fields, altogether forgetting my dress troubles as I watched the effects of the red sunset, a more than usually beautiful one. "I must treat myself to just one look at the dear old beeches in this light," I murmured, forgetting fatigue and every other discomfort as I turned from the stile and went down the lane toward the woods. I was standing in mute contemplation of the sunset effects upon the different trees. The air was calm and still; not a leaf moved, as the sunlight stole among the majestic trees, crowning one and robing another from head to foot with its red glory. I was accepting the rebuke with bowed head and clasped hands, when suddenly a sweet, low, girlish laugh—Lillian's laugh—rang out in the stillness near me.

"There! I told you how it would be. I am not artist enough for that."

"Try again," returned a man's voice, clear and strong, and in its way as musical as her own.

Whose voice—whose? For a moment I felt as though I were transfixed to the spot where I stood; then, with trembling hands, softly parted the thickly covered branches which intervened between me and the speakers. Philip! My heart had already told me that it was he; and one swift glance showed me that it was the Philip of my dreams—so improved as to bear only an ideal resemblance to the boy-lover I had parted with. He had developed grandly during the nine years we had been separated. Taller and larger in figure, his handsome bronzed face adorned with an auburn beard, while his gray eyes retained their old frank kindness of expression, he looked the personification of manly strength, physical and mental.

Impulsively I advanced a step or two, then shyly and nervously shrunk back again, clinging to the low, outspreading branches of the tree. Presently, when my foolish heart did not beat quite so wildly—presently:

"Yes; that is better. Now a few bold strokes athwart the horizon. Have you not a coarser brush?"

"Yes. I will run in and fetch one."

"Cannot I, Miss Maitland? Allow me?"

"Oh no; auntie could not tell you where to find it." And away she ran, in the opposite direction to where I stood.

Without a moment's pause, in my anxiety for our meeting to take place while he and I were alone, I stepped hastily forward. He was examining Lillian's drawing, when he caught the sound of my footstep and looked up. His eyes met mine—ah, Philip! ah me!—with the grave, calm gaze of a stranger!

I stood utterly powerless to move or speak; and perhaps I looked more than ever unlike my past self in that moment of bitter anguish. But suddenly the truth flashed upon him.

"Great heavens—*Mary!*" he ejaculated, catching me in his arms as I swayed toward him.

I was still speechless; and looking down into my face, he added gently, it seemed to me sorrowfully, "My poor Mary!"

"Am I so changed, Philip?" I murmured, in a low, broken voice.

"I—I fear you have gone through more than you would allow me to know about," he replied, reddening; adding, a little confusedly, "How was it that I did not find you at home, Mary?"

"I did not expect you quite so soon as this," I stammered out, quite as confusedly. "You said a month or six weeks, and it is only three weeks since I received your letter."

"I—found myself free sooner than I expected; and of course set my face homeward at once. I arrived at Liverpool last evening, and travelled all night in order to be here in good time in the morning."

"Did you get here this morning?"

"Yes; you had only left half an hour or so when I arrived. I should have met you, they told me, had I not taken the wrong turning from the stile."

"Had—you a pleasant voyage?" I asked, terribly conscious that this was not the kind of talk which might be expected between him and me at such a moment.

I think he was conscious of this also. He stood a moment without replying, then every line in his face seemed to grow set and firm, and he said, gravely, "How is it that your friends here do not know that I have come to claim my wife, Mary?"

"I put off telling them from time to time," I replied, in a low voice; "but I fully intended telling them this evening."

"Let us go in at once," he said, hurriedly.

He drew my hand under his arm, keeping it firmly clasped in his own, and we went silently toward the cottage. Lillian was turning over the contents of a box, in search of the brush she wanted, and Mrs. Tipper was nodding over her knitting, fatigued with her day's exertion. Neither saw us approach, and both looked up with astonished eyes when we entered the room; and, without a moment's pause, Philip introduced me to them as his promised wife.

"We have been engaged for the last ten years," he said, hurriedly, "and I have just been taking Mary to task for not having told you so."

"Dear Mary, dear sister, when you ought to have known how much good it would have done us to know!" said Lillian, with tender reproach.

"Better late than never, my dear," cheerfully put in dear old Mrs. Tipper, eying me rather anxiously, I fancied.

The ground seemed to be slipping from beneath my feet, and everything whirling round. I suppose I was looking very white and ill, for Philip gently placed me on the couch, and Lillian knelt by my side, murmuring tender words of love, as she chafed my hands, while Mrs. Tipper was bending anxiously over me with smelling-salts, etc. But I shook my head, and tried to smile into their anxious faces, as I said, "I am not given to fainting, you know—only a little tired."

"The truth is, you have sacrificed yourself for us all this time, and it is now beginning to tell upon you," said Lillian. Turning toward Philip, she added, "We have all needed her so much, and she has been so true a friend to us in our time of trouble that she has forgotten herself, Mr. Dallas."

He murmured something to the effect that he could quite understand my doing that.

"But of course it will all be very different

now," said Lillian. "It will be our turn; and we must try what we can do to pay back some of the debt we owe to her. Now don't look fierce, Mary; it's not the least use, for petted you will have to be."

"Then I am afraid fierce I shall remain," I replied, trying to speak lightly.

"That is more like yourself, dear. You are feeling better now, are you not?" asked Lillian.

"Oh yes, quite well; only a little tired from walking farther than I need have done," was my reply.

"To think of my talking 'Mary' to you all day without knowing you were more than friends!" said Lillian, looking up smilingly into Philip's face. "I know now why you bore the waiting so patiently, and why we got on so well together. I felt at home with Mr. Dallas at once, Mary. I think we both felt that we two ought to be friends. Did we not?"

He bowed assent.

"And you must please try to like me more than an ordinary friend, Mr. Dallas, or I shall be jealous. Mary is my sister, you know—or, at least, you will know by-and-by; and we cannot be separated for very long; so you must be considerate."

"Philip knows more about you than you do about him, Lillian," I put in.

"I am glad he knows about me, of course, Mary; but it will take a little time to quite forgive your reticence about him. Will it not, auntie?"

"Auntie" thought that forgiveness might just as well come soon as late, in her simple, placid way. Then, to my great relief, a diversion was caused by tea being brought in. If Philip had not won the heart of his dear little hostess before, he would have won it now by his hearty appreciation of the good things set before him. I quite understood why, for the first time since Becky had been at the cottage, her mistress had some cause to complain of her awkwardness. Becky's whole attention was concentrated upon Philip; and she placed things on the table in a somewhat hap-hazard fashion, gazing at him the while with curious, speculative eyes.

Afterward they commenced asking questions about his voyage, and so forth; and the conversation became less personal. He gave us an amusing account of his passage, humorously describing the peculiarities of life on board ship. Then, as night drew on, Mrs. Tipper very earnestly pressed the hospitalities of the cottage upon him. Of course he would be her guest—a room was already prepared, and she knew that she need not apologize to him for its homeliness. She had, I found, arranged to give up her own room for his use, and share Lillian's. But he explained that he was going back to a hotel in town, having arranged to stay there for the present.

"I am afraid I shall very frequently trespass upon your kindness, nevertheless, Mrs. Tipper. You will only get rid of me by giving up Mary, now."

At which Lillian laughingly replied, *that* would be paying too dearly for getting rid of him. "The better way would be to put up with you, for Mary's sake, and so secure you both."

In truth, Lillian was a great deal more cheerful, I might say merry, than I had seen her for many a long day, in her unselfish rejoicing over

my happiness. And the sweet, girlish, modest freedom—the freedom which is so diametrically opposite to fastness—of her manner with Philip was so pleasant to witness! It was the kind of playfulness which is so charming in a sister toward an elder brother, and which so well became her.

When at length Philip was obliged to take his departure, in order to catch the last up-train from Graybrook, he bade me, in the matter-of-course way which seems so delightful in those we love, “Come out and set me on my way, Mary; just as far as the stile, if you feel rested enough.”

Yes; of course I felt rested enough. I went out with him into the starlit lanes, walking silently on by his side, happy in the belief that *his* thoughts also were too deep for words. How could words express *my* proud humility—the deep, tender joy—the love half afraid of its own strength which I felt? Would he *ever* know the heights and depths of my love? Would a lifetime be long enough to express it? With it all, I was conscious of a shyness and awkwardness of manner, born of the indescribable feeling which accompanies and gives a tinge of pathos to great happiness in some minds. What was I, to be so blessed? What other women find their ideal fall short of the reality, as I was doing? Noble and true as I knew him to be, I had not hitherto, I think, sufficiently appreciated the geniality of Philip’s temperament and his keen sense of humor. I do not know whether it was more noticeable in contrast with Robert Wentworth, who certainly impressed one with the idea that he was older than he was; while Philip, seemed younger than his age. His fine physique, too. How very handsome he was, in the best way, and how grandly careless about it! The most cynical observer could not have detected the slightest trace of conceit or self-consciousness in his tone or bearing. In fine, his was the rare combination of physical and mental power. While he possessed the *gaieté de cœur* almost of a boy, an appeal to his intellect would call forth the cool, vigorous reasoning of a well-informed thinker.

He had won his way to wealth by dint of intelligence, persistence, and temperate living, in a climate which gives some excuse for, if it does not foster, all kinds of excess, and returned strong in mind and body to reap the fruits of his labor. Moreover, he had not been tempted to continue accumulating wealth for its own sake, nor acquired the huxtering spirit which self-made men so frequently do acquire.

“I think I must not go any farther, Philip,” I said, as we reached the stile. “You have only to cross the two fields, and turn to the right when you get into the road, that leads direct to the station.”

For a moment he made no reply, and something, I hardly knew what, brought vividly back to my mind the remembrance of another who had stood there on such a night as this, silent beneath the stars—a remembrance which struck upon my happiness as might a sudden sword-thrust upon an enraptured dreamer.

He gathered my hands into his own, and, looking down into my face, said, in a low, earnest voice, “There can be no necessity for delay between you and me, Mary. When will you let me take you away from here?”

“Take me away from here?” I repeated, rather startled by the suddenness of the proposal.

“I mean, when will you marry me, Mary?”

“We will talk about that by-and-by,” I replied, overwhelmed with happiness again, yet afraid lest I might show it more plainly than it is womanly to do if I said more.

“Why should there be any delay between you and me? I—beg of you not to make any unnecessary delay, Mary. You ought to have been my wife long ago. I know you would prefer a quiet wedding, and—afterward—wouldn’t you like to travel a few months before settling down? You used to have a fancy for seeing some of the old Continental towns.”

I could only whisper that it would be very delightful—with him—lowering my head until my cheek rested upon his hand. Then, to keep my reeling senses firm, I looked up into his face and made a little attempt at a jest about his not knowing me when first we met.

“Only for a second,” he replied. And even in that light I could see that his color was heightened. He looked pained too; and I certainly had not meant to pain him. Among my failings was not that of the desire to be always trying little wiles to test those I love, as we women are sometimes accused of doing. I had used the words solely in jest and to steady myself.

“Only for a second,” he repeated; adding gently, “and we will soon have you blooming again, Mary.”

Blooming again! I caught in my breath with a little half-sob. Then making a strong effort, telling myself that I must and would behave better than a love-sick, hysterical girl, I lightly replied, “What if my blooming days are over, Philip?”

He bent lower down, to get a better look into my face, as he said, “Nonsense! What makes you talk in that strain? It is not fair to me.” Then he added, more gravely, “You have always told me that your friends here are real ones, Mary; and they seem to be very much attached to you. It was very pleasant to hear them talk of you in your absence.”

“They are everything and more than I have described them to be, Philip. Mrs. Tipper has been like a dear old mother to me; and Lilian—the best and truest thing I can say about Lilian is, that she is as good as she looks. No one could be mistaken about Lilian. Hers is the kind of loveliness which takes its expression from the mind.”

“Yes; it is just that. The fellow who could not appreciate her deserves to lose her.” I had given him an account of Lilian’s troubles in my letters; indeed, he was well acquainted with all that was connected with my life at Fairview. “I only regret that I was not in England at the time. I suppose it is too late now for—”

“It is too late for any kind of intervention now; but if vengeance is in your thoughts, you may rest content. It will be, I think, quite punishment enough to be the husband of the girl he has married, with the remembrance of Lilian. He certainly loved Lilian.”

“Ah, that is something! When were they married?”

“About three weeks ago,” I told him. And then we got talking over the Farrar history, until the chiming of a distant clock reminded us

that he had but twenty minutes in which to reach the railway-station in order to catch the last up-train.

"I shall do it!" he ejaculated; and with a parting word and hurried kiss he vaulted over the stile, and ran across the field, turning once on the way to wave his hand to me.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONGRATULATIONS.

I WALKED slowly back toward the cottage, taking myself to task for the foolish doubts and fears which had so oppressed me. How could I have been so disloyal as to have a moment's doubt? Philip was right: it was not fair to him! As though the love of a man such as he was would depend upon a woman looking more or less blooming!

No doubt I had looked my very worst, standing there in the wood, pale and fagged and travel-stained, in my shabby old bonnet and mean-looking cloak; a great contrast to Lillian, in her fresh white piqué dress, and with her delicately beautiful coloring of eyes and hair and complexion. Of course it was perfectly natural that he should be sorry to see me looking so worn and faded; all the more sorry because he loved me. Should not I have felt pained to see him looking in any way worse than I had expected to see him? and so forth, until I had argued myself into a state of perfect content again, quite convinced that I was the happiest of women.

Lillian met me at the gate with outstretched arms.

"Dear, darling, naughty Mary! if this were a night when scolding were possible! Why did you not tell us?"

"Dear Lillian, it was wrong, I know. But in truth I was longing to tell you, only—many things prevented my doing so."

"But the wonder is how in the world you could contrive to avoid talking about him! So grand, and noble, and good—I am sure he is good."

"Yes, dear, he is good;" beginning at last to find it pleasant to talk about him.

"The idea of your having such a lover hidden up in your thoughts all the time we were worrying your life out with our troubles! How could you have so much patience and sympathy with us—with me?"

"Perhaps, Lillian, for the very reason that he was hidden up in my thoughts."

"Well, perhaps it was: yes, I can understand that, Mary;" adding, with a little sigh, "and I think I can guess now why you did not like talking about your happiness to me, dear, kind sister that you are!"

"I am glad that you like Philip, Lillian."

"Like him! Of course I do; though there is not much credit in liking one so nice as he is, I suppose. He knows how to pay compliments, too. Do you know he paid me such a nice one, Mary? He said that I reminded him of you, and that he could trace the influence of your mind upon mine. Stupid I all the while never guessing the truth! The idea of your having been engaged for ten years, and once so nearly

married, without your sister knowing anything about it!"

Afterward there were dear old Mrs. Tipper's congratulations to listen to. But although she was quite as ready as Lillian to say kind things, and evidently wished to make me understand that she was pleased for my sake, there was the shadow of a regret in her eyes, and I thought I knew the reason why.

Pleasant as it all was, it was even pleasanter to be once more alone with my thoughts. I sat by the open window half through the summer night, my elbows on the sill and my chin in my hands, trying to get used to my happiness. "Tired nature, sunk into repose, scarce told of life;" but a light breath of sound, the faint twitter of a bird, the whispering of the air among the roses clustering round the window, or the soft rustle of a leaf, seemed to hint that it was dreaming musically, as befitted a world watched over by the "silent sentinels of the night." It was early dawn before I was sufficiently sobered to betake myself to bed and attempt to sleep.

When at length sleep came, it was no vision which visited me, only a miserable distortion of what had taken place, as though some evil spirit were mocking my hopes. I rose pale and unrefreshed. The blooming process had certainly not commenced yet, I jestingly informed myself, as I tried to smile at the heavy lustre eyes and white face which my glass reflected. I could afford no more star-gazing, requiring all the proverbial beauty-sleep I was able to compass. But I made the best of myself; and in my pretty fresh morning-dress was, I flattered myself, somewhat brighter and pleasanter to look upon than I had been the night before. Lillian came in before I had quite finished, to—"see after me," she said, with a tender greeting.

"To begin with: I will not have that beautiful throat so muffled up; and I will have a bow in your hair and this flower in your dress. Now, don't be obstreperous. Where is the use of being a sister if I may not have such little privileges as this, I should like to know?" busily putting a little touch here and a little touch there to my toilet.

"Yes; that is certainly better—now you look kissable, my dear," with a gay little laugh at my consciousness. "It shows beautifully now!"

"What shows, goosey?"

"The love and happiness, and all the rest of it, child. Only look like that when he comes in, and I shall be quite satisfied. And remember, Mary, not that mean old bonnet again—not for the world! Did you order a new and fashionable one as I bade you, madam?"

I murmured something about a new bonnet being on its way, but could not speak positively as to its pleasing her.

"If you have ordered another old-fashioned-looking thing, it will have to be taken back to the place from whence it came; that's all, my dear. And until it comes, you must wear your garden-hat; it is twenty times more becoming than that old dowdy thing of a bonnet; and I have been up since five o'clock, if you please, making it pretty with new ribbon and a few poppies."

"Dear Lillian—sister!"

"Tears! Good gracious, Mary, what are you thinking of? Pray, consider your nose; pray,

do not spoil the effect! Yes; that's better; that will do, my dear;" with a grave little nod of approval, as I broke into a smile again.

It certainly was rather amusing. To judge by her tone, and without looking at her, she might have been supposed to be an elder sister admonishing and encouraging a shy young girl. Ah me! the diffidence I felt arose from a very different cause, and was of a very different kind from the diffidence of a young girl. It was nevertheless very delightful to have her hovering about me thus, her love so palpable in every word and look and tone. It was doubly precious to me just now, and perhaps she guessed that it was. By the time we were summoned to breakfast, she had succeeded in chasing away some of my morbid fancies; and she did not allow me to fall back again, keeping up a constant patter of merry speeches, at which her aunt and I were forced to smile.

Whether Lillian was beginning to see deeper into my mind than she had heretofore done, I know not; but one thing was evident—she could see the kind of treatment I required, and talked no sentiment. Mrs. Tipper looked a little surprised at her unwonted gaiety, but very agreeably surprised. Lillian never appeared to greater advantage than in these playful moods.

"Of course you and I must be considerate when Mr. Dallas is here, auntie, in the way of finding our presence required elsewhere, and making occasional discreet little disappearances, you know."

"Nonsense! as though I would allow such a thing!" I replied, laughingly.

"And as though such an experienced person as I did not know the right and proper thing to do!" She could even jest about her experience.

"Then I mean to show you that the most experienced people may sometimes err in their notions as to what is right and proper," I rejoined, lightly.

But when, just as we had finished breakfast, Lillian descried Philip coming down the lane, she ran off, with a gay look over her shoulder at me. Mrs. Tipper was already in the kitchen, in solemn consultation with Becky over the contents of the larder, intent upon making Philip an honored guest. Of course I very quickly had Lillian in with us, and allowed no more discreet disappearances. Indeed, in the first moments of my happiness it was sufficient to me to feel that Philip was present. There was even a kind of relief in having Lillian with us; and he soon found that anything which interested him and me might be freely discussed in her presence.

It was a glorious morning, and we betook ourselves to the "drawing-room." The windows were flung wide, and it was delightful to look from the cool, shaded room to the lovely scene beyond, bathed in sunshine, the shadows of the light fleecy clouds sailing in the bright-blue sky chasing each other up the hill-side; while an occasional sound, the few-and-far-between strokes of the blacksmith's hammer, or the laugh of a child at play, floated lazily toward us from the village; even the proverbially busy bee seemed to hum drowsily in the perfume-laden air.

We agreed that it was a morning expressly intended to be spent in the half-idle, wholly enjoyable way we spent it: renewing acquaintance with bits from our favorite authors, trying scraps

of songs, etc., Lillian now accompanying him and now me. Then there were our sketches to be examined and criticised—have I said Philip was no mean artist?—and our studies to be talked over, which brought us to Robert Wentworth.

I had already made Philip acquainted with him, so far as it could be done by letter, and unfortunately, as I now felt it to be, I had given more than one hint of my hopes and expectations respecting Lillian and Robert Wentworth. It was therefore natural enough that Philip should watch her a little curiously when the other's name was mentioned.

"He must be a fine fellow!" heartily said Philip, when Lillian quoted some remark of Robert Wentworth's.

"He is good," simply replied Lillian. "Not very fine, but good."

"If you interpret what I say so very literally as all that, I shall have to be very careful in the choice of my words, Miss Maitland," laughed Philip.

"I do not want you to be disappointed in him, even at first; he is plain, and rather old."

Plain, and rather old! That was *not* Robert Wentworth to me; but I recollected that I was not a girl between seventeen and eighteen, and made no comment.

Lillian looked flushed and nervous as she slipped her hand into mine, and went on in a low grave voice to him:

"Could not Mary's sister be—Lillian?"

He bowed low, with a murmured word or two about his appreciation of the privilege; and seeing that her face was still shadowed by the recollection which his use of her mother's name had called up, he presently contrived to lead to less embarrassing subjects.

After early dinner—Philip had begged that no difference should be made in the hour on his account—we went into the woods, to pass the afternoon under the grand old trees; taking with us books, needle-work, sketching materials, and what not, with the persuasion that we did not mean to be wholly idle. Philip said that it was done for the purpose of impressing him with due reverence for our talents, but declared that it was only idle people who could not enjoy being idle. He spread all the aids and appliances picturesquely about us.

"There; that ought to do, I think. The most conscientious of workers ought to be satisfied with that—no one would venture to call you idle now!" he ejaculated, throwing himself on to the turf beside us, his hands clasped at the back of his head and his gray eyes full of fun and mischief.

"The idea of your thinking you will have nothing to do but watch us!" said Lillian. We shall want lots of help, shall we not, Mary?—water fetched, and pencils cut, and—"

"No, no; I am sure you are above that sort of thing. Isn't it becoming the fashion for ladies to be independent?"—persuasively.

"We are old-fashioned, and like to be waited upon."

He laughed.

"I should like to be useful, of course. But couldn't you make me useful to point a moral? Suppose you were to illustrate the evils of laziness, for instance, and make me the example, eh, Mary?" tossing a bit of twig on to my work.

"As though I would encourage you that way."

"Show that dimple again, if you please, Miss Haddon!"

"You absurd person!"

"Thank you."

"I feel an inclination to be discreet coming on," whispered Lillian.

"Repress it at once," I replied, very decidedly.

Ah, what pleasant nonsense it was! The woods rung out with many a merry laugh at our quips and cranks and gay *badinage* that afternoon. Philip affirmed that our lives had been too sombre and severe, and that he had only arrived just in time to rescue us from becoming "superior" women. The brightening-up process devolved upon him. We could not deny that he had the power. Lillian altogether got rid of her shyness, and was almost as frank and outspoken with him as with me. She gayly claimed to be considered his sister by-and-by, and drew an amusing picture of herself in the future as a model old maid. "Not prim and proper, you know—no, indeed; I intend to be a nice little round woman, to go about loving and comforting people."

Philip confessed that he did not greatly affect old maids, but gravely opined that being round might make a difference.

I defended them as a "worshipful body," round or square, though I did not believe that Lillian would be allowed to be of the guild.

Lillian thought she would use her own judgment about it; but I recommended her asking Mr. Wyatt's advice, at which I was pelted with bits of grass.

And so passed the hours away until Becky came to summon us to tea. She gazed so long and so curiously at Philip, who happened to be talking to Lillian while she gave Mrs. Tipper's message, that I touched his arm and explained in a little aside that this was the Becky I had told him about, and that Becky's good opinion was worth something.

"Oh yes; he had not forgotten; she was my *protégée*," he replied, going on to address himself to her, asking her whether she approved of his coming to take me away by-and-by.

Perhaps it was his jesting manner which she could not understand; perhaps it was some defect in herself: whatever might be the cause, I saw that Becky was not so much impressed in his favor as the others had been. Her quiet, decided "No, sir!" highly amused him.

"Not if Miss Haddon wishes to be taken away, Becky?"

But he could not get her to say any more. When he asked for reasons, she only shook her head, turning her eyes from him to me.

He tried banter.

"I understood that Miss Haddon was a favorite of yours, Becky."

She did not appear to be at all anxious to defend herself to him, and she knew that it was not necessary to me. She stood aside for us to pass without a word, though I saw she eyed him steadily the while. Moreover, I found Becky a little cross-grained, when, later, I made occasion to ask what she thought of Mr. Dallas. "He is not so nice-looking as Mr. Wentworth, miss, to my mind," was all she would say; and as I knew that those whom Becky liked were always

good-looking, and those whom she did not affect were plain, I could draw my own conclusions. I was foolish enough to be a little annoyed, replying somewhat sharply,

"If you do not like Mr. Dallas, of course you yourself, and not he, will be to blame for it, Becky."

"Very well, miss."

Something in the expression of her eyes as she turned away made me add,

"Do you not think you ought to be inclined a little favorably toward the gentleman I am going to marry, Becky?"

"Yes, miss, I know I ought;" in a low, faltering voice. And that was all I got out of Becky.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PHILIP AND ROBERT.

WE found Robert Wentworth with Mrs. Tipper, and he too, I saw, very curiously examined Philip as they were introduced to each other. Each eyed the other curiously and critically for a moment or two, as they uttered the first few words; and I think each was as favorably impressed toward the other as I could desire them to be. They were kindred spirits, and soon recognized that they were, making acquaintance in easy, undemonstrative, manly fashion.

Robert Wentworth was like an elder brother of Philip's, and there was just sufficient difference between their minds to give a zest to their companionship. Philip's was a more mercurial temperament, while there was a vein of satire in the other, lacking in him. Lillian thought that Robert Wentworth had not the same poetical perception which Philip possessed; but that did not I, for whom the former had unfolded the hidden meaning, the subtle essence, of some of the poet's most delicate imagery. Of course I could not suppose Robert Wentworth to be Philip's superior; but neither would I do him the injustice of calling him inferior. They were different.

One thing puzzled me not a little, as time went on. Whether it was that my love for Philip made me shyer and more reticent with him, or whether he did not look for certain things in me, I know not; but one part of my mind, which was as an open book to Robert Wentworth, remained undiscovered, and even unsuspected, by my lover. Once when Philip made a little jest about Lillian's romance and enthusiasm, Robert Wentworth smilingly opined that there were graver offenders in that way than Lillian; but I knew that I was the only one to perceive his meaning. If Philip had any suspicion that the allusion was intended for me, he did not perceive its application. Would it have made any difference if I had been able to let my thoughts flow into words when alone with him? When I was his wife—when this foolish shyness, reticence, or whatever it might be, was once overcome—I knew that he would find me a much more attractive companion than now. But while I longed to give more expression to my feelings, I nervously shrunk from doing so. I almost wished that he would *force* me to show my thoughts, as Robert Wentworth used to take so much delight in doing.

What girl could love as I did? What love could be deeper and more intense than mine? Yet the consciousness that I was *not* a girl kept me silent, while my soul vibrated to every look and word of his. Ah me—ah, Philip! would it have been wiser to let you see? That night when we stood together in the moonlight—when you good-naturedly jested me about my matter-of-fact way of regarding things—would it have been better to let you see the volcano hidden beneath the snow? Ah, Philip, when you feared I had caught a chill, and wrapped my shawl closer about me, would it have been wiser to let you know *why* I was trembling beneath your touch?

I have learned to say, "No; better as it was."

But I have been anticipating. This first evening of the meeting between Robert Wentworth and Philip all was *couleur de rose*, and my mind was at rest. I sat more silent than usual, congratulating myself upon the prospect of the great desire of my heart being gratified. They two would be friends, even according to my somewhat *exigeante* notion of what friendship should be. Then it was pleasant to listen to Robert Wentworth's few words respecting his appreciation of Philip, so honestly and heartily spoken.

"You must not forget that it is a brother's right to give you away when the time for giving away comes, Mary," he said, gently, as he and I stood together by the open window a few minutes, while Philip was turning over the music for Lillian, who was singing some of his favorite airs for him.

"Will you? It is kind to wish it," I murmured, feeling that it was a great deal more than kind.

"Mr. Dallas is, I believe, worthy of any man's sister, Mary."

"I am glad you think so"—I paused a moment, then, as a sister should, added—"Robert."

He smiled, and talked pleasantly on, contriving to set me quite at ease respecting the state of his own mind. I was now able to persuade myself that he had been deceived, and that his friendship for me had never really developed into a stronger feeling. Presently he said, in his abrupt, friendly fashion, "Why do *you* not sing, Mary?"

"Oh, Lillian sings that so much better than I; and it is a favorite of Philip's."

"Well, come now and enchant our ears," going toward the piano as Lillian ceased, and looking out a song which he always said I sung well. "Now, do your best."

But although Philip and Lillian were more than satisfied, Robert was not. He and I knew that it was not my best, their kind speeches notwithstanding. He seemed to have quite changed his tactics with regard to me, doing everything in his power to make me appear to advantage in Philip's eyes. But he unconsciously deprived me of the pleasant termination of the day, which I had been looking forward to. Philip and he set forth together to walk to the railway-station, and of course there was no moonlight walk for me that night.

But there was the morrow—many a happy morrow to come now, I told myself, looking after them as they went down the lane together. The more they saw of each other, the sooner they would become friends. Lillian, who stood beside me at the gate, slipped her arm round

my waist, and laid her head against my shoulder in eloquent silence.

It was fortunate that the day had come round for paying my promised visit to Nancy Dean. I felt that I needed some kind of reminder that I did not live in a world all flowers and sunshine. I set forth the next morning alone, thinking that Nancy might possibly feel less under constraint than if Lillian were present during our interview. Philip had some banking business to transact which would prevent his getting down to us until late in the afternoon, and I had therefore ample time for my errand before his arrival.

This time I found no difficulty in obtaining admittance, and was informed that the rules allowed me to remain an hour, if I chose so to do, with my friend Nancy Dean. That hour we were at liberty to spend in either the dining-hall or exercise-ground, as we chose. We gazed earnestly and curiously at each other as we shook hands, and I hope she was as pleased with me by daylight as I was with her.

Without being handsome or even pretty, Nancy Dean's was a face which pleased me much. If expressing a shade too much self-will and the firmness which, untrained, is so apt to degenerate into obstinacy, there was no trace of meanness, deceit, or dishonesty.

"You expected me to-day, of course, Nancy?"

"I shouldn't be here if I hadn't, miss," she returned, with a grave smile. We had elected to spend the hour in the open air; and with my arm linked in hers, we paced slowly up and down part of the old court-yard, or exercise-ground, as it was called.

"In that case, I ought to be thankful that no accident occurred to prevent my coming. It might have, you know, and then poor I should have had to bear the blame for anything which followed."

"How could you have been to blame if an accident had happened, miss?"

"My dear Nancy, if you had fallen back, *some one* would have been in fault, since we could hardly throw the blame upon an accident."

"You mean *I* should have been to blame, if I had gone wrong again because you did not come?"

I smiled. "I am not altogether sure which of us would have been *most* in fault, Nancy."

"But how could you?"

"One thing is clear. I did not succeed in giving you faith in me, although I had faith in you."

She looked dubiously at me a moment, then her eyes slowly filled with tears.

"Perhaps I haven't been ready enough to believe in people. Till now, nobody ever seemed to believe in me."

"It is not for me to judge, Nancy. I can only say I am pleased that you had the strength and courage to return here and remain, under the circumstances."

"You seem to know exactly the best thing to say to encourage me, miss!" ejaculated Nancy.

"And even when you hit hard, as you sometimes do, I don't seem to mind it so much from you as I do from other people—it's different, somehow! You don't seem to enjoy thinking about my wickedness."

"If I thought you wicked, I certainly should not enjoy thinking so; and if you were, you

would not have come back here. Poor Nancy, I am afraid it has been very hard for you!"

"If you could only know *how* hard it has been!" she murmured. "Think of never being spoken to by any of the others for a week; kept in silence and solitude, and looked upon as the worst creature that ever breathed!"

"All the more credit to you for bearing it. But we will not talk about that. Let us rather think about the future. I told you I am going to be married shortly—in a month or two, probably—and then we are going abroad for a time."

"Shall I have to stay here till you come back, miss?" she asked, anxiously, her face falling at the thought.

"No, I do not wish it; that would be too much to expect. I am sure I shall be able to make some arrangement for you. Possibly I may arrange for you to stay with a dear old friend of mine, who has only one young servant, until my return; but I promise you shall not remain here much longer."

This was better; she brightened up wonderfully again, and we spent the rest of the allotted time very cheerfully. What was perhaps most cheering of all to poor Nancy was my little speech about hoping by-and-by to set things right with her relations.

"It's too late for that, miss," she replied, sadly; "they know I've been in prison, and poor mother's gone."

"Too late, indeed! Why, there is almost a lifetime before you in which to prove your innocence. Besides, after you have lived with me long enough to enable me to speak from experience, I will take the matter in hand, and write to your father and sister. In the mean time, we must seek for the poor creature for whom you suffered, and, if we can, get her to give evidence that she put the ring into your box."

She threw up her head and faced the sky. "Thank God!"

"You see now where thanks are due, Nancy," I said, softly.

"Yes," drawing a deep breath.

When a loud-clanging bell warned us that the time for my leaving her had come, I was more demonstrative in my manner than is customary with me. Several of the other inmates and their visitors were congregated in the yard, and I chose them to see that Nancy Dean had, at any rate, one friend who believed in her. The sudden flush which covered her face, the expression of the eyes turned toward the other women, as though to say, "You see!" sufficiently thanked me. It was a very pleasant walk home.

I was not a little surprised, as well as disappointed, to find that Philip did not take kindly to the idea of my *last protégée*. He came down with Robert Wentworth toward the evening, and Lillian mentioned my afternoon's errand to the Home to the latter, who had been extremely interested in Nancy's case.

Philip asked several questions about it; but I could not get him to show any interest in Nancy, if he felt any. Indeed, I could not help seeing that the idea of my visiting the Home was distasteful to him. It was all the more noticeable because Robert Wentworth had entered so warmly into the subject, taking my proceedings quite for granted.

"What led you to go there, Mary?"

What led me to go there?—what but the happiness his own letter had brought me. But that was not a question to be replied to just then, if ever; so I murmured something about having met Nancy in a state of desperation, and persuaded her to return to the Home, etc.

He said very little; his disapproval was more expressed in his manner than anything else. Seeing that he objected, and did not care to give his reasons for so doing, I did not attempt to discuss the point with him. I must trust to Nancy. If by-and-by she should prove to be a success, it would be a better argument in my favor than any I could advance. Besides, I was too happy to allow a slight divergence of opinion between us to disturb me. Of course he knew that he would find me ready enough to yield whenever he showed me a reason for so doing; he would find, too, that in my heart of hearts I preferred his gaining the victory when it came to reasoning, though it must be a fair field and no favor between us.

But if Philip did not very favorably regard my visits to Nancy, he entered warmly enough into our scheme for improving the cottage homes. He not only approved but helped us in workmanlike fashion with a little carpentering and what not, which we had been unable to compass, beginning with a bracket and shelves, and launching out into more ambitious attempts. We began to contemplate improving the architectural effect with porches to the doors, over which climbing plants were to be trained, placing a seat at the side, and so forth; and if it was not all of the very highest art as to shape and make, it would be, we flattered ourselves, picturesque and comfortable-looking. If the porch proved as attractive as the village ale-house to sit and smoke in in the summer evenings, it would be something gained.

With regard to the interior arrangements we were altogether satisfied. Our *protégés* were beginning to take some little pride in their homes, and to brighten up such parts of them as did not match well with our efforts. We still always took care to leave some part of the room as we found it, to serve as a contrast; and the challenge was now more generally accepted than at first. It must, however, be acknowledged that we still met with occasional opposition. When Jimmy Rodgers, for instance, found that his tobacco-jar was not refilled after being suggestively placed in our way, he began to show his independence again, taking to his old ways and using the table for a kettle-stand. But we looked upon ourselves as successful enough to be as independent as he was now, and we took no further trouble about him or his table; at which Sally Dent informed us he gave it as his opinion that we had more "grit" in us than he had given us credit for having, and that he wasn't sure he should not give in and clean the table himself. To his astonishment, a clean table did not open our hearts; the tobacco-jar remained unfilled.

In all our other schemes Philip joined heartily with purse and hand, and yet he so markedly stopped short when Nancy and the Home were in question. How was it? Was his remark about "the impossibility of a woman retaining the delicate grace and refinement of thought—the, so to speak, bloom of her nature—which is her greatest charm, if she became too familiar with

scenes of misery and sin," intended as a gentle warning to me?

For whomsoever it was intended, she found a ready and able advocate in Robert Wentworth. He very decidedly gave it as his opinion that the delicate grace and bloom, and all the rest of it, could not be got rid of too quickly, if they were to prevent a woman holding out her hand to any of her own sex who needed help. "But, fortunately or unfortunately, since there are not too many possessed of it, it is just the delicate grace of a refined woman which is required in such cases."

"All very well in theory, Wentworth; but if it came to practice? I am sure you would be as desirous as I should be to guard a wife or sister from contact with the degraded?"

"My dear fellow, not I; unless I feared the possibility of some of her virtues being rubbed off by the contact: in that case she would of course require very careful guarding. But I should be very proud of a sister who could go *safely* among those who needed her, be they whom they might."

Philip waived further discussion with a "By-and-by, Wentworth." I believe he thought that it was not complimentary to Lilian and me to carry on the conversation in our presence.

I could not but be grateful for the chivalrous respect which both showed toward women, though I could not help contrasting their very opposite ways of showing it. One seemed to represent the chivalry of the past, and the other that of the present. I could appreciate both—the poetry and romance of the old chivalry, and the reason and respect in the new; and I did not ask myself which was most really complimentary to women, or whether each was not a little the worse for being so dissevered from the other. It might be that in my heart I should have preferred Philip representing the present rather than the past; but I did not acknowledge so much to myself.

But all this was only a faint ripple on our stream, not sufficient to prevent the current from running smooth.

CHAPTER XXX.

MRS. TRAFFORD'S HAPPINESS.

ALTHOUGH the precise date for our wedding-day was not as yet decided upon, it was tacitly understood that the orthodox preparations were being carried on for it, so far as depended upon milliners and dress-makers. I did not think it necessary to explain to Mrs. Tipper and Lilian that the little I had to spend for the purpose was already spent. And indeed I considered that I had a quite sufficient wardrobe for a portionless bride, without trespassing upon their generosity, which I knew would be brought into play by the slightest hint of a want on my part.

We made the most of the departing summer days, Lilian and I sufficiently occupied to satisfy our consciences and add a piquancy to idleness. After our morning rambles, visits to the cottages, and an early dinner, we betook ourselves to the woods, where Philip read to us while Lilian and I worked. And sometimes we went farther afield, devoting the day to exploring the adjacent country, picnicking in the most lovely spots, and filling our sketch-books. In the evenings there was

music and the frequent visits of Robert, with delightful conversation, in which we all aired our pet theories without any jar in the concord—a quartet in which each played a different part to make an harmonious whole.

Nevertheless, our summer sky was not entirely free from clouds. Mr. Wyatt, whose attentions to Lilian had latterly been most marked, could not be made to understand that there was no hope for him; while Lilian could not be made to believe that her aunt and I were correct in our surmise respecting the cause of his so frequently finding his way in the direction of the cottage. But there came a day when he found courage to challenge fortune and make his hopes known to her. He had joined us in one of our rambles, and I suppose she felt a little hesitation about separating Philip and me, as well as the natural dread which a delicately minded girl feels of appearing to suppose that love-making must necessarily follow being alone with a gentleman for a few minutes, and so gave Mr. Wyatt the opportunity he had been seeking.

We lost sight of them for a short time, and I gave Philip a hint of what I suspected to be the cause of Mr. Wyatt detaining Lilian.

"Love her!" he ejaculated, stopping short and staring at me in the greatest astonishment. "But she does not return it—impossible! She is surely not going to throw herself away like that!"

"I do not think there would be any throwing away in the case, Philip. Mr. Wyatt is a good man, and a gentleman. The real difficulty is that Lilian does not care for him in any other way than as a friend, and she never will." At which Philip hastened to make the *amende*.

"I ought not to have spoken in that way, Mary. Of course he is a good fellow—for any one else's husband."

I could not help smilingly agreeing to that. It was ever so much more agreeable to think of Mr. Wyatt as the husband of any other than Lilian. When she presently returned alone, looking very grave and regretful, walking silently home with us, we knew that Mr. Wyatt had been answered. Fortunately his was a nature not difficult to be consoled; and it so happened that he had a pretty cousin eager to console him. In a very short time Lilian had the relief and pleasure of knowing that she had done him no permanent harm.

One piece of good-fortune came to us which I had been almost afraid to hope for. The house so beautifully situated, which I had so long coveted for our future home, and which was aptly named Hill Side, was to be sold. We found that the interior arrangements were all that could be desired. In an unpretending way it was the perfection of a house—one we both would choose before all others. Though not numerous, the rooms were mostly large for the size of the house; while, as Lilian laughingly said, my pet aversion to square rooms had been duly considered by the builder. A long drawing-room opening to a veranda terrace, and commanding one of the finest views in Kent, with dining-room facing in the same direction, and a delightful little morning-room and library and study at the side, the latter possessing a special little view of its own down what was artistically made to appear a steep declivity, its sides clothed with

bushes and hanging plants, and boasting a pretty running brook. You had only to make believe a little to fancy yourself living in some wild, mountainous region, when looking from the oriel-window of this charming little room.

Philip was quite as enthusiastic and inclined to ignore disadvantages as were Lillian and I. Climbing the hill! Who minded climbing, to reach such a nest as that? Stables for the modest little turnout we should keep could be had in the village at the foot of the hill; and as to the distance from the railway-station, shops, etc., we grandly pooh-poohed all that as unimportant to two people who cared for fashion and change as little as we two meant to do. Food was to be got; and that was enough, depending for our supply of books, etc., as we should, from London. The best of it was that these little drawbacks told in our favor in the purchase, being considered by most people as great disadvantages, which lowered the value of the property; consequently Philip was able to gratify our taste at much less cost than he at first anticipated.

He at once set about the necessary negotiations for completing the purchase, planning all kinds of improvements and alterations, Lillian and I being in constant request in the consultations.

Meantime, Mr. and Mrs. Trafford had returned from their wedding-tour, and we were telling each other that we meant to pay the expected visit of congratulation. But we contented ourselves as long as possible with *meaning* to pay it, being in no haste to make our appearance at Fairview again. There could never be anything stronger than politeness between either Hill Side or the cottage and Fairview, and we did not wish to pretend that there could. But either the bride became impatient to assure us of her happiness, or she was curious to find out for herself whether the rumor which had reached her respecting the intentions of the gentleman who visited so regularly at the cottage was true; for she waived ceremony at last, and came to visit us—she and “Caroline.”

Philip and Lillian and I were in consultation about the furniture for Hill Side, which we wanted to be artistic and at the same time befitting a cheerful country home. The only room we were inclined to be really extravagant about was the library, and that I was chiefly answerable for. Philip gravely opined that I must mean to spend a great deal of my time there, and I as gravely allowed that I did. Lillian and I were to be the only ladies admitted there. I reminded him that he did not yet know Mrs. Trafford and Mrs. Chichester, and that therefore he had better not make his rules too stringent.

We were in the midst of an animated discussion upon the respective merits of light and dark oak, when Philip drew our attention to what he termed an extraordinary collection of finery coming down the lane.

It was Mrs. Trafford, her long train sweeping the dust into clouds behind her, accompanied by Mrs. Chichester. It would be vain to attempt a description of her appearance, laden as she was with every conceivable folly which French and English *modistes* could invent. Perhaps Philip's comment—“Too much of everything, from the lady herself to her feathers and furbelows”—best expressed the impression her appearance gave. I saw his eyes turn for refreshment upon Lillian's

simple holland dress and the delicate coloring and outline of her face. She always looked her best in contrast with Marian; the soft rose of her cheeks, the deep, tender, blue eyes, and the pale-gold hair, in eloquent protest against the other's vivid black and white and red.

Mrs. Trafford (how glad I was to be able to discontinue calling her Miss Farrar!) had no misgivings. Misgivings! Was not everything she had on in the latest extreme of fashion? She evidently considered that it was for us to have misgivings, though she generously tried to make matters pleasant and set us at our ease by giving us a description of Paris and details of fashionable life there. We had no idea what Paris life was like; no one could without having been there; it was too absolutely-delightful, quite too awfully charming. She positively could not exist without going every year to the enchanting place, and so forth, and so forth—all in superlatives.

She made a great point, too, of telling us how very much “Dear Arthur” had enjoyed life there. “He really was quite too enraptured, and said he had never known what enjoyment was till he had seen Paris.”

Mrs. Chichester put in a word to the effect that her brother had frequently visited Paris, and the life there was not new to him. But Marian reminded her that he had not before visited it with *her*, which made all the difference.

With lowered eyes, Mrs. Chichester softly remarked that it doubtlessly did make a difference.

Of course it did—all the difference! “And”—turning pleasantly to Lillian once again—“I have brought over a French maid with me; one really cannot expect to look *commy fo* without, don't you know, in these days.”

I tranquilly supposed that they could not. Never again would Marian receive a home-thrust from me; though there could not be friendship, there would be no more war between us. I did not even allude to the Pratts.

“You must all come to Fairview to dinner, auntie and all—*ong fam-y*, you know; you really must.” And turning to Philip, she graciously expressed a hope that Mr. Dallas also would do her the honor.

Mr. Dallas gravely replied that he was entirely in our hands, and ready to do our bidding. At which she laughingly advised me not to take all that for gospel. “You can't expect it *always* to go on like that, you know, Miss Haddon; though I am sure *I* have no reason to complain. No one could be more thought of than I am. You would say that, if you could have seen how patiently Arthur waited for me at the shops—hours and hours, I assure you. The very worst he did was to give a little sigh sometimes, and no one could be offended at that, knowing how some of the husbands go on. Waiting about in the shops really is a test of a husband's good-nature, Mr. Dallas.”

Philip meekly supposed that it really was.

“Is it true that Mr. Dallas has become the purchaser of the little place—Hill Side, isn't it called?—which you can see from some part of the Fairview grounds, Miss Haddon?”

“Yes,” I replied; Philip had bought it.

“It looks a charming little place. But is it large enough?”

I said that Mr. Dallas thought it large enough

for his means; at which she was amiably anxious to point out the disadvantages of having a large place and the advantages of having a small one.

"A small house is so—cosy—you know, and so—warm in the winter, and all that. I sometimes almost wish I lived in a small way myself; I really do. No one would believe the expense it is to keep up a large place like Fairview; they really wouldn't. And then the trouble of having a large staff of servants! You have no *idea* what men-servants are in a house—so extravagant and expensive and lazy; it's quite *too* dreadful, my dear!—Really, aunt"—turning to the dear little lady placidly eying her—"you are the best off, after all, if you could only believe it."

"I do believe it, Mrs. Trafford."

But that was more than Marian could understand. "It's very good of you to say so, I am sure, aunt; but perhaps, after all, it does seem like old times to you."

Mrs. Chichester flushed up now and then, a little out of humor, I fancied, at seeing herself thus travestied. But she said very little; indeed, during the whole visit she seemed to be absorbed in one idea—so lost in astonishment at my good-fortune as to be quite unlike her usual self. She was even impolitic enough to give some expression to her astonishment in a little aside to Lillian, who was quite indignant at the implied ill-compliment to me.

"You *must* say you will come and dine with us," repeated Marian, when she at length rose to take her departure. "You positively must! Arthur will never forgive me if I don't make you promise. What day have we disengaged next week, Caroline?"

Caroline could not or would not recollect what day they had disengaged, a little angry, probably, at a smile which I could not suppress, and was chidden by her sister-in-law accordingly.

"But you ought to make a point of remembering such things, you know; and I must beg that you will do so in future," said Mrs. Trafford, with a tone and look which seemed to show that Mrs. Chichester's office was no sinecure. I think she was heartily glad when the visit was over.

"You must come up and see the things I bought in Paris," whispered Mrs. Trafford, good-naturedly, in a little aside to me. "It will give you an idea of what is worn. Ask for Céleste, if I do not happen to be in the way, and I will tell her she is to show you beforehand, for she knows how particular I am. She will put you up to all sorts of things if you make friends with her. You can't conceive how much those French maids know about improving the figure and complexion, and all that; though of course I do not need anything of the kind."

I murmured something about being obliged, not to seem ungrateful for what was evidently meant to be a kindness.

"Oh, you are quite welcome." Then, lowering her voice again, "He is a dear! How long have you been engaged?"

"Nearly ten years."

"Ten years!"

"Mr. Dallas has been abroad some years, and has only just returned," I said, seeing no necessity for making a mystery about it.

"And kept true to you all that time! He *must* be good! So handsome, too—so *very*

handsome. All the heroes in the books are big, and have broad shoulders *now*," sentimentally. "His beard just the right color, too! How you must date upon him, and how jealous you must be! Between ourselves, I could hardly bear Arthur to be out of my sight before we were married. It's different now, of course; if he does not behave well, I can stop his allowance, you know. That would be only fair."

This seemed to confirm the rumor which had reached us to the effect that when it came to be a question of settlements, Marian had proved to be sufficiently a woman of business to keep the power in her own hands, notwithstanding the angry remonstrances of her lover and his sister. Perhaps, also, it was true, as it was said to be, that he would have drawn back at the last moment but for shame.

I made some indefinite reply about putting off the time for being jealous as long as possible.

"Well, I can only say that it is a good thing I did not see him before I saw Arthur, or else you might have had cause enough to be jealous! But you needn't be afraid now. I am not one of *that* sort!"

And with that parting assurance Mrs. Trafford went her way, talking loudly over her shoulder, as she walked down the lane, to "Caroline," who followed in her wake, about the inconvenience of not being able to get into "my carriage" at the gate.

We did not laugh over the bride's grandeur as we might have done had she been any one else; the remembrance of all that she had deprived Lillian of was too fresh upon us for that. And Lillian herself was, in Marian's society, reminded more vividly of the wrong which had been done to her mother.

"You were quite right, Mary," said Philip to me when we were alone—alluding to the bridegroom. "The poor wretch is punished enough! It's an *awful* punishment! By-the-bye, what was she whispering to you about all that time?"

"Offering me a view of the latest Paris fashions; and admiring you, ungrateful man that you are!" I smilingly replied. "She thinks I must be terribly jealous."

"Jealous?" reddening. "What did she mean?"

"I suppose she thinks she would be jealous in my place," I said, a little surprised at his manner.

"In—your place. I do not understand," he returned, as it seemed to me now, even angrily.

I laid my hand upon his arm.

"I only repeated it because of its absurdity, Philip. Of course I know that between you and me it would be 'Away at once with either love or jealousy.'"

He took my hand in his, lifted it to his lips, and then turned away without a word. Well, I did not object to such silent leave-takings; they were eloquent enough for me. But I must not jest again in that way, I told myself, as I slowly returned to the cottage again: Philip evidently did not like it. Oddly enough, the first thing Lillian said, when I met her at the gate, where she was waiting for me, was upon the same topic. She had, it appeared, heard the one ominous word in Marian's whispered talk to me.

"What was Mrs. Trafford saying to you about jealousy, Mary?" she asked, in a low tone and

with averted eyes, trifling as she spoke with my watch-chain.

Did she fancy that Marian was still inclined to be jealous of her? I wondered.

"Only some nonsense about my being jealous of Philip, dearie," I lightly replied.

"Jealous!—jealous of—Philip? What did she mean?" she ejaculated, using the words he had used with the same manner and even more anger.

"She seems to consider it is only natural that I should be jealous of him, since she tells me that his beard is the fashionable color for heroes this season; but she was good enough to assure me that I need not be afraid of her now, although things might have been different if she had seen him some time ago. So I feel quite safe."

"Oh, Mary, are you sure, are you sure?"—with a little hysterical laugh.

"Am I sure, Lillian! Do you too require an assurance that I am not likely to become jealous of Mrs. Trafford? You are almost as bad as Philip, and that is saying a great deal. Why, Lillian, what is the matter?"

She was laughing and crying together, with her arms about me, as different from her usual self as it was possible to be.

"It's the—the heat, I think," she murmured. "Do not notice me. I am stupid to-night, Mary."

"She has deceived herself; her love for Arthur Trafford is not yet dead; and she is suffering the shame which is natural to one of her nature at the discovery," I thought. Inexpressibly pained, I silently drew her hand under my arm and led her into the cottage.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AT THE STILE.

WHEN was I first conscious of it? When was the first faint shadow of it perceived by the others? It would be difficult to say precisely when; but as days went by, some subtle change was taking place and making itself felt among us. Gradually an indefinable something was extracting the sunshine out of our lives. None of us admitted so much to each other; indeed, I think we were all equally anxious to have it thought that everything was going on in precisely the same way as before. And yet—where was the frank confidence and ease which only a short time previously had so marked our intercourse? It had given place to constraint and a restless anxiety to appear unconstrained.

I fancied that I could account for Lillian's nervousness and constraint; but Philip's gaiety seemed to be growing less and less spontaneous, and dear old Mrs. Tipper looked depressed, not to say unhappy; while I myself felt uncomfortable without being able to trace the cause, unless it arose from sympathy with the others. In vain did I try to account for the change. There was certainly no unkindly feeling betwixt us; indeed, I think we were each and all more carefully considerate of each other's feelings than we had hitherto been, displaying a great deal more anxiety to prove that the strength of our attachment to each other was as undiminished as ever than was necessary.

I felt no shade of difference in my own senti-

ments; I knew that I felt toward them precisely the same as before, although I was gradually adopting their tone. What troubled me most of all was the reserve growing up between Lillian and me. I tried more than once to break through it; but her real distress—her tears, as she clung to me, entreating me to believe in her love—pained without enlightening me. And when I, a little impatiently, replied that it rather seemed as though she did not believe in *my* love, it only brought more tears and distress.

She now frequently excused herself from accompanying Philip and me in our walks and excursions, and shut herself up in her own room many hours during the day. The explanation that she had taken a fancy for studying French history was not a satisfactory one to me. True, there was evidence that she was diligently plodding through a certain amount of work, but why should that separate us? The studies she had hitherto undertaken had not shut me out of her confidence. She had often declared that the greater part of the enjoyment of such work was to compare notes with me upon the subjects we were reading; and why should French history be an exception?

I was beginning to lose patience—mystery has ever been and ever will be provoking to me—and one evening, when Robert Wentworth asked me some questions about our work, I irritably replied that he must ask Lillian; I could only answer for myself now.

"I am only doing a little French history," she faltered, becoming very pale, and presently making an excuse for leaving the room.

"What is it? What has so changed her?" I asked, turning toward him.

"I do not observe any particular change," he replied, lowering his eyes before mine.

"Pray do not you become as mysterious as the rest," I said, angrily.

But he *was* mysterious. Even Robert Wentworth, who had always been so outspoken and unsparing, was becoming considerate even to politeness. He made no reply, standing before the open window, apparently absorbed in thought. I was about to add some little remark that I had hitherto trusted to his friendship, in a tone meant to be caustic, when I caught sight of his face and shrunk into my shell again. What made him look like that? What did it mean? And why did he so hurriedly take his departure the moment old Mrs. Tipper came into the room, in a manner as unlike the Robert Wentworth of the past as it was possible to be?

But it must not be supposed that I was going to succumb to this state of things. Before I succumbed, I must know the reason why. It would take a great deal yet to make me lose hope. I had too much respect for them, and belief in the power of my own love, to be without hope of succeeding in dissipating the clouds which had gathered about us. The one thing to be done was to find out *what* it was that had come between us. Could I once find out that, I should not despair of the rest. After some anxious reflection, I fancied that I had discovered the cause of the alteration in Lillian's bearing, and took Philip into my confidence.

He listened gravely, I thought even anxiously, and yet he did not appear to think it necessary for me to make any attempt to alter things.

"If—she prefers being more alone, I think—wouldn't it be best not to interfere, Mary?" hesitatingly.

"If I did not care for her, perhaps it would be better not to interfere, as you term it," I hotly rejoined. "But, as it happens, I do care for her, and therefore I cannot see her so changed without making some effort to help her."

"No one could doubt your love for her, Mary," he replied, in a low voice, laying his hand gently upon mine.

"Then how can I help being anxious, especially when I see that it is not good for her to be moping alone? Any one might see that it is doing her harm. Cannot *you* see the difference in her of late?" He made no reply; and, taking his assent for granted, I went on, "Do you know, I am sadly afraid that she is fretting—" I did not like to say plainly about Arthur Trafford, but added, "She is beginning to look just as she did in the first shock of finding that she had lost Arthur Trafford! Ah, spare my roses!"

He was mercilessly, though I think unconsciously, tearing to pieces a beautiful bunch of light and dark roses which had been given to me by one of the cottagers, scattering the leaves in all directions.

"I—beg your pardon."

"I really think you ought, sir!" was my playful rejoinder. "If my path is to be strewn with roses, we need not be so extravagant as that about it. I shall not trust you to carry flowers again."

He remained so long silent, standing in the same position, that I was about to ask him what he was thinking of, when he impetuously turned toward me and hurriedly said, "Why should there be any longer delay, Mary? Why cannot our marriage take place at once—next week? For God's sake, do not let us go on like this!"

"Go on like this!" I repeated, looking up into his face. "Go on like this, Philip?"

"Say it shall be soon—say when?" catching my hands in both of his with a grip which made me wince, as he hurriedly continued, "Why do you wish all this delay?"

Had it been spoken in a different tone—had he only *looked* differently! I tried to believe that it was the eagerness of happiness in his face; but, alas! it looked terribly like misery! For a moment my heart stood still in an agony of fear; then I put the disloyal doubt aside, telling myself that it was my too exalted notions which had led to disappointment: I had expected so much more than any woman has a right to expect, and so forth. Then, after a moment or two, I honestly replied, "I do *not* wish it, Philip. Of course I will say next week, if you wish it; and"—with a faint little attempt at a jest—"if you do not mind about my having fewer furbelows to pack?"

"I do wish it; and—and—until then I must ask you to excuse my not coming down quite so regularly. So much to arrange, you know," he hastily continued, "in case we should take it into our heads to remain abroad for some time."

"Yes; very well," I murmured, as one in a dream. It was all so different—so terribly different from anything I had expected.

But I soon persuaded myself that the fault, if fault there were, must be mine. How could *he* be changed? or if he were, why should he so

eagerly urge me to delay our marriage no longer?

As if to rebuke my doubt, he turned toward me and gently said, "God grant that I may be worthy of you, Mary! You are a good woman. I must hope in time to be more worthy of you."

I was conscious that just then I could have better borne a loving jest at my imperfections than this little set speech of praise. I never before cared so little about being a "good woman" as I did at that moment. But I told myself that I would not be critical—how horribly critical I seemed to be growing! So I looked up into his face with a smile, as I said something about his being perfect enough for me.

"You are good."

"Oh, please do not say anything more about my goodness!"

There was another pause; and then he said, "I think you mentioned that you wished it to be a quiet affair, Mary, and at the little church in the vale—St. John's, isn't it called?"

"Yes, Philip."

"And you must let me know what I ought to do besides procuring the ring and license. I am sure you will give me credit for wishing not to be remiss in any way, and will not mind giving me a hint if I appear likely to fall short in any of the—proper observances."

Proper observances! How coldly the words struck upon me!

"Shall you not come down *once*, Philip?" I murmured.

"Once? Oh yes, of course; and—you can give me any little commission by letter, you know."

Then looking at his watch, he found that he might catch the eight-o'clock train, and hastily bade me good-night, asking me to excuse him at the cottage, and tell them about our plans.

"Very well, Philip," I murmured, more disappointed than I should have cared to acknowledge at his not asking me to accompany him the remainder of the distance to the stile, to which I always walked with him when Robert Wentworth was not with us. Moreover, I thought that the parting kiss was to be forgotten. I believe that it *was* forgotten for a moment. But he turned back and pressed his lips for a moment upon my brow.

"Good-night, Mary. God grant I may be worthy of you!"

"Good-night, Philip," I faltered.

As in a dream I walked down the lane, entered the cottage, and turned into the little parlor, not a little relieved to find no one there.

The heat was almost stifling, the swallows flying low beneath the lowering sky, and there was the heavy stillness—the, so to speak, pause in the atmosphere which presages a coming storm. The windows and doors were flung wide open; and I could hear Mrs. Tipper and Becky talking to each other in their confidential way, as they bustled in and out the back garden, fetching in the clothes, which the former always put out to "sweeten," as she termed it, after they were returned from the wash. Lillian was, I suppose, in her own room, as her habit was of late.

Throwing off my hat, I sat down, and, with my hands tightly locked upon my lap, I tried to think—to understand my own sensations, asking myself over and over again what was wrong—

what made me like this? half conscious all the while of a discussion over a hole in the table-cloth that ought not to have been allowed to get to such a stage without being darned.

"A stitch in time saves nine, you know, Becky; never you leave a thin place, and you'll never have a hole to mend;" and so on.

Suddenly, as my eyes wandered aimlessly about the room, they fell upon some documents on the table referring to the sale of Hill Side, which Philip had brought down to show us, and which I knew he had intended to take away. Reflecting that he was very desirous of completing the purchase, that the delay of a post might make a difference, and that I might yet overtake him if I were quick, I hurriedly caught up the papers in my hand and ran down the lane toward the stile. Have I mentioned that there was a sharp curve in the lane before it reached the stile, so that you came close upon the latter before it was in sight? I had just arrived at the curve when the sound of voices reached me; and, recollecting that I had not waited to put my hat on, and not wishing to be recognized by any one, I paused a moment to draw the hood of my cloak over my head.

Robert Wentworth and Philip! I had time for a moment's surprise that the former should be there when we had not seen him at the cottage, before Philip's words reached me: "And you have been waiting here to say this to me. But I am not so base as that, Wentworth! I have just begged her to be my wife at once, and she has consented. She suspects nothing."

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated Robert Wentworth.

I could not have moved now had my life depended upon it—though my life *did* seem to depend upon it. "Suspect what? What was there to suspect?" I asked myself, in a bewildered kind of way.

"God grant that she may be always spared the knowledge!"

"She shall be, Wentworth, if it be in my power to spare her."

"Great heavens! that it should be possible to love another woman after knowing her! Man, you never can have known her as she is, or it would be impossible for another woman to come between you. The other is no more to be compared—"

"Respect her, Wentworth; blame me as you will, but respect Lillian."

"Lilian!" I muttered—"Lilian!"

"She is, I think—I trust, utterly unconscious of my—madness. But if she knew, and if she—cared for me, she would be loyal to the right. You ought to be sure of that, knowing what her love for Mary is, Wentworth."

"Yes; she is true; she will try to be true. But it is quite time that—"

I knew that the voices sounded fainter and fainter, and that the sense of the words became lost to me, because they were walking on; I knew that they were great drops of rain, and *not* tears, pattering down upon me where I lay prone upon the ground; and I could recollect that the papers should not be lost; so I had kept my senses.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BENT, BUT NOT BROKEN.

AN hour later I slipped noiselessly in at the cottage door, which stood hospitably open for me, passed the parlor, where I could hear Mrs. Tipper and Lillian talking together, and stole up to my own room. Gusts of wind and rain were beating in at the open window. I afterward heard that a terrible storm had swept over the country that night, laying waste the crops and spoiling the harvest in all directions. I only knew of the storm which had devastated my hopes. I imagined that I had myself sufficiently under control to venture to return—but, alas! Another bitter struggle, another wrestle with my weaker self, amidst wild prayers for help—for death.

Then I was on my feet again, telling myself, in a pitiable, would-be jaunty strain, "No, you will never slip out of your misery *in that way*, Mary Haddon, and it is folly to hope it. You are not the kind of person, you know. You could not die of a broken heart if you were to try. Your vocation may be to suffer, but you will not die under it—certainly not without a long preliminary struggle to live. You are not made of the material which fades gracefully away under pressure; and yesterday you would have affirmed that you did not wish to be made of it. You have always scouted the idea of being at the mercy of circumstances: you have been a little hard upon those who succumbed under trial; in your inmost heart, you know that you have not had much patience with weakness, and now has come the opportunity for proving your superiority to ordinary mortals."

Then my mood changed. I dragged myself toward the dressing-glass, thrust the damp hair from my brow, and stared at my face with miserable, mocking eyes, as I reviled it for its want of loveliness, and taunted myself with not being able to keep a good man's love. Then I fell to weeping and pleading again; and, thank God! it was this time for help to *live*. Alas! would the victory *ever* come? Do others find as much difficulty as I did in overcoming? Have others as much cause to feel humble in the hour of victory as I had? I know that it is all very pitiful to look back upon, though the consciousness of my weakness under trial did me great service afterward. Weak and faint, but, thank God! not worsted, I at length rose from my knees, bathed my face and hands, and after a while had my feeling sufficiently under control to think over the best way of doing what it was my resolute purpose to do. My power of self-command was very soon put to the test. I was conscious of another sound besides that of the sighing and sobbing of the wind, which, like a tired child who has spent its passion, was sinking to rest again. Some one was tapping rather loudly at the door.

Alas! how weak I still was! How could I meet Lillian's eyes? Not yet—I dared not. But while I stood, with my hands pressed against my throbbing heart, gazing at the door, I recognized Becky's voice. What a reprieve! I hastened to admit her, and then locked the door again.

"If you please, miss, Mrs. Tipper was afraid you was out in all this storm, and—" She stopped, looked at me for a moment with dilating eyes, and then her tears began to flow. "Oh,

Miss Haddon, dear, are you ill? What's the matter?"

"You must not cry, and you must not speak so loudly, Becky."

She saw that I waited until she had ceased, and hastily rubbed the tears out of her eyes.

Then, in a low, quiet voice, I said,

"A great trial has to be gone through, Becky. It *must* be borne, and I think you can help me to bear it."

"I knewed it was coming—I knewed it!" said Becky, under her breath.

"What did you know was coming?"

She appeared for a moment to be searching in her mind for the best way of telling me, and at the same time expressing her sympathy; then, with lowered eyes, replied,

"I loved Tom—I always shall love him—and he can't love me."

She knew, then! Probably every one but myself had seen it!

"In that case you know that such things are not to be talked about, Becky."

"Yes, miss, only—"

"I know that it was your regard for me which made you mention it. But we need all our strength just now—you as well as I—and we must not think or speak of anything that will weaken it. I want your help, and to help me you must be cool, and quiet, and strong. Will you try to be that?"

"Yes, I will—I will, indeed, dear Miss Haddon;" eagerly adding, "What can I do?"

I stood pressing my two hands upon my temples in anxious thought a few moments, then asked,

"Do I look unlike my usual self, Becky—ill? Tell me exactly how I look to you," thinking of the effect which the first sight of me had had upon her.

"Yes, you look terrible white, and wild, and trembling; and there's great black rims round your eyes," gravely and straightforwardly replied Becky.

"As though I had been frightened by the storm? There has been a storm, hasn't there?"

"Yes, there's been a terrible storm, miss; but—"

"Go on, Becky."

"You're not the sort to look like that about a storm."

"I see."

If that was Becky's opinion, the storm would not do for Lillian and Mrs. Tipper, and the alteration in my appearance must be accounted for in some other way. I was seeking about in my mind for a way out of the difficulty, when Becky unconsciously helped me with the exclamation,

"Oh, Miss Haddon, dear, what have you done to your hand?"

Looking down, I saw that there was a slight wound in it—made, I suppose, when I fell, by a nail or sharp stone—and that it had been bleeding somewhat freely.

"Nothing to hurt, Becky," I murmured; "but it will serve my purpose. Give me a handkerchief—quick! and now another."

She understood me; and when Lillian presently came running up, she found appearances sufficiently sanguinary—quite enough so to account for my looking strange and unlike my usual self.

"Dear Mary, what is it? Oh, how have you hurt yourself?"

It was really a very superficial wound; but of course I did not explain that, making a little demonstration about the wrapping up with Becky's assistance.

"It has made you look quite ill, dear," went on Lillian, kneeling down by my side.

"Let me tie that, Becky."

But Becky would not yield an inch until I had given her a little look of reminder, and then did so very reluctantly.

"And your clothes are quite wet, darling!" ejaculated Lillian. "You must have been out in all that storm. Fearful, wasn't it? Could not you find any shelter?"

"No; it had to be borne as best it might," I grimly replied, though I called myself to order at once, a startled look in Lillian's eyes showing me that I could not talk about storms with impunity as yet.

Then there was dear little Mrs. Tipper hurrying in with a concerned face to inquire what had happened, and recommending all sorts of remedies for my hand. Did I not think it better to send Becky into the village for Mr. Stone, the surgeon? Was I *quite* sure it did not require being strapped up? Had I looked to see if there was anything in the wound? etc.

But I had my hand well muffled up; and assured them, with more truth than they suspected, that it really was not a very serious cut.

"Only I think I will say good-night, and take off these wet things at once, if you will excuse my not coming down again," I added, with a feverish longing to be alone.

I had, nevertheless, to submit to mulled wine and a great deal of comforting and petting. And Lillian entreated to be allowed to remain with me during the night.

"Dear Mary, do let me stay. I feel sure that you are not so well as you think you are."

But I sent her off with a jest, and my first difficulty was overcome. Two hours later, when she had made sure that the others were at rest, Becky stole into my room.

"I will lie on the floor, and I won't speak a word; but don't send me away, please don't send me away," she whispered.

I was obliged to make the faithful girl share my bed, for I could not prevail upon her to leave me. Probably her presence was some little help to me in the way of preventing any indulgence of sentiment, had I been inclined to yield to it again. When morning came, cool and fresh and sunny after the storm, I was myself again; not my looks—the effects of the storm which had passed over me were not to be so easily effaced—but I was nerved in spirit for what was to come. In the early morning—so early that Becky had barely time to slip away—came Lillian in her white wrapper; and then I noticed how fragile she had become. My Lillian! Had I even been for a moment so unjust as to doubt you, I could have doubted you no longer! She was full of loving sympathy about my hand.

"Dear Mary, I could not sleep for thinking of you. Even now you do not look quite yourself."

"Nevertheless, I am myself."

She nestled closer to me, looking anxiously and doubtfully up into my face. How thankful I should have been just at that moment if love were as blind as it is sometimes depicted as being!

"No; not quite your old self. Say—do say that you love me, Mary."

"Is it necessary to say it, Lillian?"

"Yes," feverishly.

"Then I love you, child."

"And—and say that you believe my love for you is true—say it!"

"I know that your love for me is true, my sister."

Once more she clung to me trembling, in her deep emotion, but silently this time; and, believing that she was asking for strength to go on, I waited until she was able to do so. Although I knew now that she loved Philip—it was as plain to me as that he loved her—I thought it better to let her herself lead up to what she wanted to say. It would comfort her by-and-by to remember she had been able to say it. Presently she looked up into my face, a holy light in the sweet eyes, as they steadily met mine.

"Mary, you have not told me when your wedding is to take place. Recollect, you must give me at least a week's notice for my dress. I do not choose you to have a shabby bride'smaid. No, indeed; I mean every one to see that—she loves you. Is the time fixed?"

"Philip wished me to decide last night, and—something was said about next week, dearie."

"I am glad it is settled, Mary," with grave earnestness, her eyes still fixed upon mine.

"But—I am afraid it will shock you very much to hear it—some way, I do not care to think about it."

She grew whiter, clinging closer to me as she echoed,

"Not care to think about it—your marriage!"

I steadied myself. One weak word—a look—and all would be in vain.

"It does seem a little strange even to myself. But to confess the truth" (I could hardly keep back a bitter smile at the thought of the truth helping me so), "I had scarcely promised Philip an hour, before I began to think I would put it off."

"Why?" she murmured—"why?"

"It is so difficult to explain the workings of one's own mind. I am not sure whether marriage is my vocation. I begin almost to fancy that I must have been intended for an old maid. Would it shock you very much if I were to be one, after all?"

"You!—an old maid? How could that be? You are jesting, of course."

"I am not so sure. But run away and dress, child. If we are late for breakfast, auntie will fancy that all sorts of dreadful things have happened to us."

She obeyed me, but was, I saw, puzzled, and even a little frightened, at my jesting. The only effect of my first attempt had been to make her startled and afraid. Her knowledge of me had not taught her to expect that I should not know my own mind upon so momentous a question as my marriage. My task would be difficult indeed. At breakfast she told Mrs. Tipper that my marriage was to take place the following week.

"Next week, dear?" said the little lady, looking from one to the other of us in a nervous, startled way, adding, rather confusedly, "I did not expect—that is, I thought there would be more time for—preparations, you know."

"I believe it is all Mary's fault; and that she gave us so short a notice on purpose to escape a fuss, as she calls it, auntie. But she will not escape any the more for that, will she? A great deal may be done in a week."

"Of course we shall do the very best we can do in the time, dear," returned the little lady, looking the least self-possessed of the three of us, as she went on to ask me, in a trembling voice, which day in the week was fixed upon.

I said something about its not being decided yet, and tried to force the conversation into other channels. But Lillian would talk about nothing but the wedding and the preparations to be made for it. Her forced gayety might have deceived me, had I not known.

"You will not require to buy much, auntie; the gray moire and white lace shawl, which you only wore once at the Warmans' fête, will do beautifully with a new bonnet. But I, of course, must be new from head to foot—white and blue—I suppose. The best plan will be to write to Miss Jefferies and give her a *carte-blanche* to send everything that is right; for we do not mind a little expense for such an occasion, do we, auntie?"

"No, dear, no; of course not. But you have not asked what Mary has chosen."

"Oh, that will be white, of course. When is your dress coming down, Mary? I must see that it is becomingly made; you know you are so careless about such matters."

I made some remark to the effect that wedding dresses and wedding paraphernalia in general did not sufficiently interest me to seem worth the time and trouble they cost.

But Lillian was not to be repressed, returning again and again to the one topic.

"And you must not forget that you promised to let auntie and me take the management of Hill Side during your absence, and see that all your plans are being properly carried out. Nancy is to go there at once, I suppose? Philip says that the oak furniture for the library will not be ready for a couple of months, on account of the firm having so many orders for the pattern you chose. And, recollect, Mary, I am to have the pleasure of choosing *everything* for your own little cosy; I know your taste so well that I am sure I shall please you, and you are not to see it until it is finished."

All I could do was to try to give them the impression, without saying so much in words, that I was not as interested in the question as might have been expected. I saw that it would not do to venture far, with Mrs. Tipper's eyes turned so watchfully and anxiously upon me.

My hardest trial was the unexpected arrival of Philip soon after breakfast was over. Whether he had come down only to fetch the papers, or whether it was in consequence of what had passed between himself and Robert Wentworth, I know not, but he availed himself of the opportunity to tell Mrs. Tipper that I had consented that our marriage should take place the following week.

At his first words I took the precaution of seating myself at the piano, turning away from them as I ran the fingers of my one hand over the notes, with a demonstration of trying the air of a new song which he had added to our collection. Then, with my fingers on the keys, I

stopped a moment—quite naturally, I flattered myself—to throw him a few words over my shoulder.

"The idea of your taking my words so literally as all that!"

"I not only took your words literally, but mean to make you keep to them literally."

"Oh, nonsense!"

Ah, Philip, how surprised you were, as indeed you well might be, at my assumption of flightiness! How more than surprised you were afterward, when I placed every obstacle I could think of in the way to prevent our being alone together; and how honestly you tried to act the part of a lover in the presence of Mrs. Tipper and Lilian, insisting upon my keeping my word, and refusing to accept any excuses for delay, Lilian as honestly taking your side!

Fortunately, my maimed hand, which I kept in a sling and made the most of, sufficed to account for my altered appearance. But for that and my bearing toward Lilian, Philip might have suspected. Then he found me so entirely free from anything like pique or anger toward himself, that he could not imagine the change he observed to be occasioned by any fault of his own. I had, indeed, nothing to dissemble in the way of anger. In my moments of deepest misery, it was given me to see that there had been no intended disloyalty to me. Philip's love for Lilian and her love for him were simply the natural consequence of two so well fitted for each other being thrown together intimately as they had been. I am writing from a distance of time, and, of course, in a calmer frame of mind than I was in at the moment of the trial; but I know that my thoughts all tended to exonerate them from the first.

None knew better than did I how completely free Lilian was from anything in the way of trying to attract, even as much as girls may honestly do. Knowing what I did—reading both their hearts—it was very precious to me to see their truth and fealty to the right. I knew that if they once perceived my suffering, nothing would induce them to accept happiness that way. I *must* keep my nerves steady! As much as I was able to compass that first day was to puzzle them all; but even that was a little step—it was something that they could see the change without discovering the cause. Quite enough to begin with.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"A WOMAN'S ERRAND."

AFTER making two or three attempts to obtain a private interview with me, and finding that it was not to be, Philip did not stay very long, explaining that he had only come down for the papers, and had business in town for the remainder of the day. Somewhat more gravely and quietly than usual, he shook hands with Mrs. Tipper and Lilian; and then, in a matter-of-course way, said, "Come, Mary."

I knew that I must not refuse. Murmuring an excuse for a moment, I ran up to my room, and fell upon my knees, asking for the strength I so sorely needed for the coming trial; then joined him again, and we went out together. As we walked down the lane, I felt that he, too,

was nerving himself; and presently he asked, in a low, grave voice, "What made you talk in the way you did just now, Mary?"

I was in a difficult position. If I attempted to justify myself, he would take alarm at once, and bind me and himself still closer to our bond. I could only treat it as a jest.

"We all talk nonsense sometimes, Philip."

"I suppose so; but that is a kind of nonsense you have not taught me to expect from you."

"I am afraid you expect too much from me."

"I certainly expect a great deal."

Fortunately I had something to say which would keep off love-speeches; and, without any attempt to smooth the way, I said it.

"Philip, I want to ask you to give me ten pounds. I have spent all my money."

Oddly enough, he did not know that I was entirely without money. I thought it sufficient to tell him only that my dear mother's income died with her, not wishing to pain him with the knowledge that I had been so nearly destitute. I think he imagined that I had a small income of my own, and, as I avoided the subject, did not like to appear curious about it. Even now, I believe that he did not suspect me to be entirely penniless, merely supposing that I had spent all that I had in hand. The five-and-twenty pounds had been expended to the last shilling in furnishing up my modest wardrobe, and for small incidental expenses in the way of my share toward the small gifts at the cottages, etc. I had shrunk from the idea of making him acquainted with the state of my finances, knowing how large-hearted he was, and how much would be forced upon me if he once guessed my need. Mrs. Tipper was always protesting against the value and number of the offerings which found their way to the cottage, while Lilian and I were afraid of expressing a wish in his presence.

It was all very different now. It would cheer and comfort him by-and-by to reflect that I was able to ask a favor of him just at this crisis. Had I not been so sorely pressed as I was, it would still have been as well to ask him.

"Ten pounds!" he ejaculated, stopping short in his walk to gaze at me in the greatest astonishment, asking himself, I think, if *this* was the explanation of the change which he had observed in me. "I am utterly ashamed of my stupidity in allowing you to name such a thing; though I am sure you will do me the justice to attribute it solely to the want of thought."

"You see I do not mind asking you, Philip."

"Mind, indeed! of course you do not. I will run back at once and write a check."

"No; please do not—not if you have as much as ten pounds with you. Just now I want only that."

"Ten pounds? Take what I have about me," hastily pulling out his purse and putting it into my hand.

"But indeed I could not take all this!" I returned, seeing that the purse contained several notes as well as gold. "I do not want any more than ten pounds."

"Nonsense! don't make a fuss over such a trifle."

But I separated two five-pound notes from the rest, and was very decided about his taking back the purse.

"Then I shall, of course, send a check as soon

as I get back. By-the-way, Mary, I am making arrangements for the settlement of three hundred a year upon you; and of course all is yours, absolutely, in the event of—"

I broke down for a few moments, leaning against the stile where we were standing.

"Nay, Mary—" Then I think that he saw something more in my face than even the allusion to his death seemed to warrant. He went on, with grave anxiety, "I fear you are not well. Is your hand painful?"

Ah! my hand—how thankful I was for the suggestion! I slipped it under my cloak, and dragged away the bandage, which again opened the wound.

"Bleeding afresh! You must really have it seen to, Mary."

"Oh no; it is really a very trifling affair." In my misery and despair, I almost laughed at the idea of being able to feel any physical pain.

He assisted me to tighten the bandage again. But I presently knew that it would not do to have his hands touching me and his face close to mine in this way; so, with a little brusque remark about his want of skill (ah, Philip, had you known what it cost me!), I declared that my hand required no more fussing over. I had the parting to go through, and needed all my nerve. First, I must make sure of his not coming down to the cottage for two or three days.

"You said you expect to be very much engaged, and therefore I suppose we shall not see you again until the end of the week—Friday or Saturday, perhaps?"

This was Tuesday, and I wanted to make sure of two clear days.

"I will contrive to run down before that, if you wish it, Mary."

"No; I too have much to do. Do not come before Friday."

"Very well. You will tell me then which day you have decided upon, since you will not say now."

I had waived the decision as to which day the wedding was to take place; and I did so again, merely repeating "Friday."

"All right; take care of yourself, and be sure to have the hand seen to." He was stooping down to give me the customary kiss before crossing the stile; but I took his two hands in mine, and looked up into his face, I think as calmly and steadily as I had prayed for strength to do.

"God bless you, Philip!" Then I put my arms about his neck, lifted up my face to his, and kissed him. "Good-bye, dear Philip!"

I saw an expression of surprise, a slight doubt and hesitation in his eyes. He had not found me so demonstrative as this before, and was for the moment puzzled to account for it. But I contrived to get up a smile, which I think satisfied him. Then with a last wrench I turned away, hearing as though from another world his answering "Good-bye" as he vaulted over the stile.

After that, the rest would be easy. I allowed myself one hour in the woods—not for the indulgence of regret—I knew too well the danger of that—but for recovery, and got back to the cottage in time for our early dinner. Moreover, I forced myself to eat, knowing that I should require all the strength I could get, and delighted dear kind old Mrs. Tipper's heart by asking for a glass of wine.

It was a terrible ordeal, sitting there under their tender, watchful eyes; but I got through it tolerably, I think. Afterward, I told them that I wanted to catch the three-o'clock up-train, adding a purposely indefinite remark about having some arrangements to make in town.

"Is Mr. Dallas going to meet you, my dear?" asked Mrs. Tipper, anxiously.

"No; I am going on a woman's errand," I replied, with a sad little half-smile at the thought of what their surprise would be if they could know how very literally I was speaking.

"Must you go to-day?—may not I go with you, dear Mary?" pleaded Lillian. "You are looking so pale and unlike yourself, I do not like the idea of your going alone."

"I should fancy that there was something really the matter with me, if I could not go alone so short a distance as that, dearie," I lightly replied. "I think I will allow my age to protect me."

She drew nearer to me, looking at me in the nervous, half-afraid way she so frequently did of late, as she laid her hand upon my arm.

"I wish you would not talk like that—dear Mary, why do you?"

I was not strong enough to bear much in this way; so replied with an attempt at a jest, which made her shrink away again. I dare say my jests were flavorless enough, and in strange contrast to my looks.

Mrs. Tipper's silent, anxious watchfulness was even harder to bear than Lillian's tender love. It was not my journey to town which puzzled them—I saw that they imagined I was intent upon preparing some little pleasant surprise for them at my wedding—but the change they saw in me, which no amount of diplomacy could hide.

How thankful I was when I at length made my escape to my own room! But I was not allowed to go alone. I had to bear Lillian's loving attendance while I was putting on my bonnet and cloak. Indeed, she lingered by my side until I had got half-way down the lane.

"You will not be very late, Mary?"

"No, dearie; I think not—I hope not."

"We shall be longing to see you back."

"And you must not be surprised if I return in a very conceited frame of mind, after being made so much of." I lightly replied.

"Only come back *yourself*," she murmured, giving me a last kiss as she turned away.

Dear Lillian, did she in truth guess something of what the lightness cost me? I knew that I did not deceive her wholly. Although she might be in some doubt as to the cause, I did not succeed in hiding the effects from her.

I arrived at the London terminus about four o'clock, and took a cab, directing the man to drive to a West-end street facing St. James's Park. My errand was to one of the largest mansions there, which at any other time I should have considered it required some nerve to approach in a way so humble. I could quite understand the cabman's hesitating inquiry as to whether I wished to be driven to the principal entrance. Probably I did not appear to him quite up to the standard of the house-keeper's room. Fortunately I was not able to give a thought to my appearance. Had I been visiting the queen, I should have thought of her only as a fellow-woman, in my deep absorption.

Three hours later I was taken back to the railway-station in a luxurious carriage, borne swiftly along by spirited horses; a slight, refined, delicate-looking woman, with earnest, thoughtful eyes, and attired almost as simply as myself, was sitting by my side with my hand in hers, as we now and again touched upon the subject which occupied our thoughts.

I had found a friend in my time of need, and such a one as I had not dared to hope for. But this in due time. We parted with just a steady look and grasp of the hand.

"To-morrow?"

"Yes; between six and seven."

I returned to the cottage, certainly not looking worse than when I had quitted it, and was received with a welcome which made me almost lose courage again. Fortunately it was very nearly our usual time for retiring. Fortunately, too, I had much to do, and it had to be done in the small hours of the night, so that I had no time to give to the indulgence of my feelings when I was left alone in my room. First turning out the contents of my drawers and boxes, I separated from them a few things which were absolutely needful for my purpose. One dress and cloak and bonnet were all that I should require, besides a small supply of under-clothing. The latter I put into a small trunk which Becky could easily carry, and then replaced the other things in the drawers again, arranging and ticketing them in orderly, methodical fashion, as I wished them by-and-by to be distributed.

If "Tom" should in course of time prove more appreciative of Becky—which, in consequence of a hint I had received from Lydia, I did not despair of so much as she did—I pleased myself with the idea that the contents of certain drawers would make a very respectable outfit for her. The plain gray silk dress, which I had purchased for my own wedding, would not be too fine for hers. In a note placed on the top of the things, I begged Mrs. Tipper to give them to Becky when the right time came. Afterward, I took out the little collection of my dear mother's jewellery. It was really a much better one than I had believed it to be; indeed, I had never before examined the contents of the packet. When it appeared probable that the jewels would have to be sold, I had avoided looking at them; shrinking painfully from the idea of calculating upon the money value of my mother's only legacy to me; and perhaps also, in my time of need, a little afraid of being tempted by the knowledge of its worth. One diamond ring, a large single stone, which even I could tell was of some value, I put on the finger of my left hand, which would never wear another now. That was all I would keep. I then put aside a pretty ruby brooch for my dear old friend Mrs. Tipper; and after some hesitation about making a little offering to Philip, I satisfied myself with selecting a valuable antique ring which had belonged to my father, and writing a line begging Lilian to give it to him with the love of his sister Mary. The rest—I was quite proud of the quantity now—I packed up and addressed to the care of Mrs. Tipper—my gift to my dear Lilian on her wedding-day.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TWO LETTERS.

AFTER arranging everything else, I sat down to write my farewell letters, commencing with one to Philip, and being very careful to allow no tears to fall upon the paper.

"DEAR PHILIP,—I ought to have told you what I am about to write, when I bade you farewell this morning; but I wanted our parting to be, as it was, a happy one. Had I had the courage to tell you, instead of writing, I know you would not have yielded to me; perhaps you would not even have listened. When you read this, your blame cannot reach me; and until you can forgive me we shall not meet again. Dear Philip, I cannot be your wife. I must bear all the blame of not making it known to you until now as best I may; but I cannot be your wife. The conviction has only become absolutely clear to me since you so much pressed me to make no longer delay."

("Ah, Philip, may you never suspect *how* it was made clear to me!") I mentally ejaculated, breaking down for a few moments in an agony of suffering. But I sternly called myself to order, and was presently bending to my task again.)

"I have chosen a different life, and only delay explaining what that life is, and why it now seems more congenial to me than being a wife" (to the man who loves another woman, was in my thoughts), "until you have quite forgiven me. Indeed, it is the belief that that time will come which gives me the courage to act as I am doing. But there is one way, and only one, by which you can prove that your forgiveness is sincere, and give me the comfort of believing that I have not shadowed your life. If I hear that you are able, by-and-by, to find some other woman more appreciative than I—"

(I dropped the pen, and bowed my face upon my hands again in the bitterness of grief. "More appreciative than I!" But I forced myself to my task again, and left the words as they were. If he once suspected that it was a sacrifice, would he accept it, however willingly it were offered? Loved he not honor more? Besides, this must be a letter which he could show to Lilian; at any rate by-and-by, and no suspicion of the truth must reach her.)

"If that time comes, and I earnestly desire that it may, I shall be able, perhaps, to justify myself to my own conscience. I know only one whom I should consider worthy of you, one not to be easily won, but worth the labor of a lifetime to win. I dare not name her—I am almost afraid to write of her. But, dear Philip, if it could be—if she whom I love above all other women could be in time won to make up to you for the loss of me, I shall have nothing to regret. I can only repeat that nothing but the knowledge of your happiness will give me the courage to hope for your forgiveness and to meet you again. Meantime, I can only beg you to try to believe in your loving sister,

MARY."

I read the letter through with not a little dissatisfaction, though I could not see how to amend it. It had been so difficult to say sufficient to serve the purpose without giving some clue to the truth. I could not help a little bitter

smile at the reflection, how very different would his judgment of that letter have been if he loved me! How scornfully would such excuses have been swept away if I had been the woman he loved! How angrily he would have taunted me for being what in fact I should have been had I deliberately wronged him! Alas! I was writing to a man whose love for me was dead, and who yet desired to act honorably toward me. He would not be inclined to be unkindly critical about my *manner* of setting him free, if I could only contrive to make him believe that I wished to do so.

To Lillian I wrote in a somewhat more jaunty strain. Better that my letter should seem to be written even slightly than sadly. But I had been so little accustomed to this kind of diplomacy, that I was astonished as well as saddened to find how close one might keep to the truth in the letter, while departing so far from it in the spirit. Neither to Philip nor to Lillian did I dare to tell the truth, and yet I could write all this without appearing to depart from it! Fortunately this kind of diplomacy blinds none who are not inclined to be blinded.

"MY DEAR SISTER,—You must try not to be very angry with me for running away without bidding you farewell in some better fashion than this. But by acting as I am doing, I avoid your scoldings, or perhaps I had better say pleadings. It is really no use arguing with a person like me, as I think you have discovered before now. And as I have very deliberately made up my mind, there really is nothing to be done. You have, I know, been a great deal puzzled of late to account for the change which you have perceived in me; and as I could not explain it without shocking you, I have waited to get out of the way first. Dear Lillian, I was not in jest when I told you I had begun to suspect that marriage is not my vocation; and I have at length come to the conclusion to obey my instincts, which tend in another direction. I believe that you will in time agree with me in thinking that I have done for the best; though I fear you will be very angry with me at first, not being able to see all my motives. Please get dear Mrs. Tipper to ask Philip to come down sometimes, and try what you both can do to cheer and comfort him. He knows so few people, and he will be so terribly lonely. I must trust that in time he will come to acknowledge that I may not be altogether so selfish and inconsiderate as I must appear to be to him and to all of you in the first moments of disappointment. I will say this much to you, dear sister—I feel, and the feeling is not altogether of sudden growth, that I am too old for Philip; or perhaps I ought rather to say, he is too young for me. At any rate, I have chosen a different life, and only wait until I feel sure that you have all forgiven me to prove to you that I am happy in it. Say all that is kind to dear Mrs. Tipper for me. I must hope to be able to prove my gratitude to her by-and-by. Ah, Lillian, my sister, if I dared to write about my hopes! I can only say that if Philip is in time fortunate enough to find some good woman willing to make up for the past to him, my gratitude toward her will be very great. I am going away because I think it is best for us all that I should go, and because the persuasions

which your love might prompt you to use would not induce me to alter my decision. I have begged Philip to try to believe in a sister's love, and I ask you too, dear Lillian, to believe in the love of your sister,
MARY."

Little as I was satisfied with these two letters, I knew that I should not be able to improve upon them, however much I might try to do so. The fault was that I could not be explicit; and that would be apparent to myself, if not to the others, however elegantly my sentences might be turned.

I put the letters aside until they should be required, and then lay down for a few hours' rest. Thank God, it *was* rest! I fell into a deep, dreamless sleep, and only awoke when Becky came to call me in the morning. There was still the same expression in her face, half sorrow, half pity, as though she saw cause for both as she looked at me.

"Now, Becky, you must not look at me in that way, to begin with. I am going to depend a great deal upon you, and it will not do to let your face tell all you are thinking about, as it is doing now."

"I can't help it showing, because— Oh, Miss Haddon, dear, I know you are not so happy as you pretend to be—I know it! And it's ever so much worse to see you look like that than as if you were crying and sobbing."

I saw that it was no use trying to throw dust into Becky's eyes.

"Well, suppose I am not very happy, Becky, and suppose I have some good reason for pretending, as you call it, to be so. Suppose that I do not wish to grieve your dear old mistress and Miss Lillian by allowing them to see that I am unhappy. It is of great importance that I should appear cheerful to-day; and I want you to help me as much as possible to make them think that I am, for—Becky, I am going away, and they must not know I am going."

Becky threw up her hands. "Going away!"

"Hush! No one but you must know that I am going."

She was on the carpet clinging to my feet. "Take me with you; do, pray, take me, Miss Haddon, dear! No one will ever love you better, and I can't stay without you!"

I made her get up; and taking her two hands in mine, murmured, in a broken voice, "Try to trust me, Becky. If I could take you with me, it would be very selfish of me to do so. It is your duty to stay here, as it is my duty to go. But I shall not be so far away as I wish them to believe I am—recollect, as I *wish* them to believe; and I may be able to see you frequently, if I find that I can trust you to keep my secret."

"You may trust me, miss."

"I am sure I can, or I would not ask you to help me. I must not break down this last day, Becky; for the sake of others as well as myself, I *must* not."

She dried her eyes, and presently the expression I wanted came into her face.

"Please forgive me. I won't show it any more, and I will do anything you tell me."

"First, and above all, you must earnestly do what you can to assist me to make it appear that I am feeling neither sorrow nor anger to-day, Becky."

"I will," she replied, simply and honestly.

"And, next, I want you to contrive to carry that small portmanteau into the wood for me at dusk this evening, when some one will meet you and bring it to me. You must contrive it so that no one will know that you have helped me. The best time for you to take it will be while the ladies are at tea. If you take in tea at the usual time, precisely at seven, you would have a spare half-hour, which would be time enough. Slip out the back way, and carry it anyhow. I cannot take it myself, as there must be no good-bye."

"Very well, miss. This one?"

"Yes. It is not too heavy for you, I hope?"

"Oh no, miss; it is not that," lugubriously.

"Now, Becky, please do not forget. *That* is not looking cheerful, you know."

"No, Miss Haddon, dear; I won't forget, when I'm down-stairs."

Fortunately, she helped me to get up a smile, to begin with, at the breakfast-table. How shall I describe the expression of Becky's face when she came in with the coffee, etc.? Her mouth was distended with a grin, which was in strange contrast with the sadness in her eyes, and her whole face resembling, as Lillian said, an india-rubber one pulled out of shape.

Whenever she entered the room there was the same grin on her face. In fact, in her anxiety to be loyal to me, she was overacting her part, and it culminated, when, after looking at her in some astonishment, Lillian inquired if she had received any good news.

"Yes—no. It's only because I'm so happy to-day, miss," returned Becky, with a still more alarming distention of her mouth.

I think Mrs. Tipper had occasion afterward to congratulate herself upon Becky's "happy days" not coming very frequently.

"She has broken two plates and a cup already, my dears," anxiously said the little lady to Lillian and me. "And I can't find in my heart to be angry with her about it, when she says it's through being so happy; but really, you know, it is a most unfortunate way of showing her happiness."

Lillian and I made a merry little jest at it, advising her to look sharply after such household treasures as Windsor Castle, etc.

"I wouldn't let her dust them to-day for the world, my dears!" ejaculated the little lady, hastily trotting off to the kitchen again.

I did not allow Lillian to make her escape afterward. I smilingly decided that there was to be no French history to-day, and that she and I were to spend the morning together in the old delightful fashion of the past. Philip was not coming for a day or two; and we would go over some of the old work, which had been somewhat neglected of late, with the exception of music and singing. A little steady work, and the consultations over it, was bracing for us both, and set us at our ease as personal talk would certainly not have done. We were not, either of us, strong enough just then to talk about ourselves. Moreover, I begged Mrs. Tipper to make it a fête-day, and treat us to one of her famous lemon puddings; and she was enjoying herself to her heart's content in the kitchen, only too delighted to be asked to treat us, and bent upon showing that a lemon pudding was not enough to

constitute a feast in her estimation. The only disturbing influence was poor Becky's hilarity.

"My dears, it really is not natural," the little lady confided to us at dinner. "No more like smiling than a baby in convulsions. I was almost frightened at the strange faces she made just now in the kitchen; and if it goes on, I must make her take some medicine."

I begged Becky off that infliction, persuading her anxious mistress to wait a few hours.

Kind Becky! she would very soon be able to look as she felt. There would be nothing unnatural in her regret at my departure, after having known me so long a time. On the whole, I was more successful than I had dared to hope for in the way of leaving a pleasant impression upon the minds of Mrs. Tipper and Lillian—just the impression I wished to give them.

They believed that I was happier than I had been for some time previously, and I know now that they attributed my happiness to the fact of the date being at length fixed for my wedding to take place. They had seen just enough to perceive that some disturbing influence was at work with me; and the sudden change in my bearing seemed to them to imply that my doubts and fears were now set at rest. It did me real good to witness the unfeigned relief in Lillian's face, the unselfishness which could rejoice in my happiness though her own might be wrecked. I know now how much she had suffered from shame and dread—how terribly afraid she had been lest I should divine any part of the truth, lamenting over what she considered to be her disloyalty to me, and blaming herself as she certainly did not deserve to be blamed.

"Dear Mary, it seems quite like old times again, does it not?" she said, looking up into my face with the nearest approach to happiness in her own which I had seen there for some time, as I bent over her with a playful criticism upon a bit of foliage she was doing.

"It has been a pleasant day, has it not, dearie?" I returned. "All the pleasanter for French history being kept out of the programme, I think. You know I never did take kindly to that."

She flushed up, nestling closer to my side.

"There shall be no more of it, Mary," she whispered.

I replied with a tender kiss; then lightly said,

"I really feel quite kissably inclined this afternoon!" turning to my dear old friend, and giving her two or three hearty good-bye kisses, then back again to Lillian with a last hug.

"And now, I must run off again;" adding, as I reached the door, "do not wait tea for me. I shall not be able to get back by then."

"To town, Mary?" asked Lillian. "And I am not to be permitted to accompany you again? I feel sure there must be something very mysterious going on!"

But she was smiling, and I believe that both she and her aunt were now quite at ease about it, having made up their minds that their first surmise—that I was preparing some pretty surprise for them—was a correct one.

I ran up to my room, hastily indicated to Becky where she was to find the two letters in a couple of hours' time, put on my bonnet and cloak, gave a quiet embrace and warning look to the faithful girl, sobbing under her breath, then

went down-stairs again. I dared not venture to go into the little parlor for a last word, lest some tender speech of Lilian's should cause me to break down; so little would do it just now, when every nerve was stretched to its utmost tension.

I passed swiftly out, and down the garden path, only venturing to give one look back to nod and kiss my hand when I reached the gate, and then sped on as fast as my feet would carry me. I was just turning into the lane which led toward the stile, when suddenly I found myself face to face with Robert Wentworth.

"Where are you going to at that rate, Mary?"

I shrunk back, for a moment incapable of uttering a word, eying him desperately, almost defiantly; for I felt in my misery as though he had suddenly presented himself in my path to bar my escape—a new power to strive against, when my strength was almost spent. He could always see deeper than any one else, and he had come upon me when I was so unprepared. I had just dropped the smiling mask which I had found it so difficult to wear all day, and was beginning to feel sufficiently secure from observation to be less careful as to what my face might tell. I caught in my breath, shrinking farther away, but facing him like an animal at bay.

For a few moments he stood gazing at me, apparently as much at a loss for words as I was myself, then his eyes fell upon my muffled hand, and he asked,

"Have you hurt your hand, Mary?"

"Yes."

"Not seriously, I hope? How did it happen?"

I looked down at my hand in a dazed kind of way, trying to recollect what had happened to it.

"I don't know. Good-bye."

"Mary, is there anything to be done which a brother might do for you?" he asked, in a low, troubled voice.

I tried to think what brothers could do, and what there was to be done for me, then shook my head.

"For old friendship's sake, *do* treat me as a brother now, Mary!"

His very evident perturbation had the good effect of making me rally my scattered wits, and I was so far like myself again as to reply,

"The only—only way in which you can help me just now is to let me go without any further questioning."

He stood aside at once without a word, and I passed on. But I had no sooner done so than my conscience smote me. Was *this* the way to part from him—the one above all others so true to me? I turned back to where he remained standing, laid my hand for a moment upon his arm, and said,

"Please forgive my rudeness, Robert; and believe that if there were anything for a brother to do, I would ask you to do it. And perhaps you *will* be able to help me presently in trying to convince them that, however blamable I may at first appear, I have acted, as I believe, for the best," thinking that they might possibly turn to him for advice and assistance. Then, offering my hand, I added, tremulously, "Good-bye, Robert."

"God keep you, Mary!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A TWELVEMONTH AFTER.

A GLORIOUS morning in early August. I was standing in a large, cheerful room, from the windows of which was an extensive view of beautiful country, hill and dale, clothed with the rich ripe fulness of fruit-time, while to ear were borne "the distant cries of reapers in the corn—all the live murmur of a summer day."

I was attiring myself—or I ought rather to say being attired—for a wedding, attended right royally, no less than twenty handmaidens hovering about me, each eager to do something toward my adornment; and each as desirous that I should look my very best as I was myself, which is saying a great deal.

Never was slave of fashion more anxious to make an effective appearance than was I on this bright August morning. But even I began to be satisfied as the process of adornment went on, and I was gradually transformed from a sober brown chrysalis into a brilliant butterfly. A bright-blue silk dress, an elegant lace cloak, white bonnet with blush roses, etc., etc. Everything, be it understood, of the very best that money could buy, and made in the latest mode, there not being a sombre color or faded shred about me. "All new, and fresh, and bright, as befits a butterfly!" I ejaculated, contemplating myself with a glad smile.

And then there was the one thing—ah, I knew it now; my prayers *had* been answered! Even allowing for the flush of excitement, this was not the face of a twelvemonth ago smiling gayly back at me from the dressing-glass. The eyes had lost their mournfulness, the mouth had become used to smile, and the whole face was full of life and color. "Yes, it all matches beautifully," I acknowledged, in smiling assent to the exclamations of my attendants. "But I require care, you know," as they all pressed about me; "not a rose must be crushed. And it is to be hoped that I shall not forget that I wear a train, and spoil the effect by falling over it," which raised a laugh among my handmaidens, as royal wit should. Then, being pronounced "finished," I went out into the gallery, and descended the broad staircase (my home was one of the finest old mansions in Kent) with my train about me. In the long room I was met by Jane Osborne, who, after examining me very critically from head to foot, was graciously pleased to add her testimony to that of the rest, and pronounce that I should do. I was nevertheless obliged to call her to order in a little aside for a certain trembling of the voice and moisture in the eyes—a weakness not to be looked over in Jane Osborne.

"God bless you, Mary! By five o'clock, remember."

I just touched her lips, since she would have it so, notwithstanding my pointing it out to her that it was not a time for sentiment; and then, with her hand in mine and attended by my train, I went into the court-yard, where my carriage awaited me.

"It couldn't have been grander if it had been created out of a pumpkin!" I whispered to Jane.

She looked uneasily at me.

"Do not try to jest, Mary," she replied, anxiously.

"Why not, if I feel equal to it, you foolish person?"

"Are you equal to it, Mary?"

"Quite. If I had doubted it before, I knew when I saw myself in the glass this morning. You ought to be able to see the difference."

"Yes," she murmured, "there is a difference. You will find the flowers in the carriage, Mary."

I stepped in, and was swiftly borne away, amidst—I had almost written a flourish of trumpets, so very loud and shrill were some of the voices shouting all sorts of good wishes after me.

I flattered myself that the effect was very telling indeed, when my equipage, with its spirited horses and coachman and footman wearing large breastplates of flowers, drew up before the porch of the pretty little ivy-covered vale church. I was received by the bandle and pew-opener with due respect, and found that I was in very good time. The gentlemen and some of the guests were already in the vestry, said the pew-opener; and in the porch were waiting two pretty young bride'smaids, who eyed me rather curiously. They had just time to remind me that my place was with the guests inside the church, and I to reply that I preferred waiting there, when a carriage of much more modest pretensions than mine drew up, and the two I waited for stepped out.

"Mary! Mary!" ejaculated Lilian, springing toward me with outstretched arms, forgetful, as I even then had the nerve to remind her, of our finery. What would become of me if I gave way now? "Mary! Mary!"

And no sooner had I released myself from Lilian than there was my dear old Mrs. Tipper giving me a good honest hug, utterly regardless of appearances. And as to finery, she had long ceased to allow that to interfere with her love, and was not to be daunted by any such consideration now.

The little bride'smaids, who were very carefully guarding their laces and muslins, reserving themselves for the right moment, looked with much disfavor at an ebullition of feeling at the wrong point in the ceremony; and now reminded us that it was half-past eleven, and that the clergyman and the other guests had been waiting some time. At which, with a meaning look at me, Mrs. Tipper put Lilian's hand into mine, and we too passed up the aisle together, while the dear little woman walked after us with the bride'smaids, notwithstanding their whispered protestations that it was "wrong—altogether wrong—and the effect was quite spoiled!"

As Philip turned to meet us, I put his bride's hand into his with a smile which appeared to satisfy even him. Moreover, Robert Wentworth's face brightened, and Robert Wentworth's critical observance had been anticipated with some little anxiety.

Lilian's uncle, the father of the bride'smaids, was to "give her away." He looked not a little curiously at the person whose appearance seemed to cause so much sensation, but his curiosity did not affect me.

At the words, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" Major Maitland gave the necessary response; but both bride and bridegroom turned their eyes upon me, as though the gift were mine.

As soon as the ceremony was over, Philip and Lilian turned toward me; and for a few moments

we three gave no thought to the *convenances*, as we clasped hands and murmured a few words meant only for each other. Then the rest of the party gathered about the bride and bridegroom, and I became conscious of the presence of others that were known to me: Philip's brother, Mrs. Dallas, and his wife, and Mrs. Trafford and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Chichester. Marian Trafford was gorgeously attired in what no doubt was the latest Paris fashion; although I think that even she was conscious that her splendor did not eclipse mine. They had not evidently expected to see me there, and both, I felt, watched very curiously for any slight giving-way upon my part. But if I could calmly meet Philip's eyes, it may be imagined that I was proof against the scrutiny of either Marian Trafford or her sister-in-law. And Mrs. Chichester's softly spoken little aside, "Did not I think that the bride and bridegroom were an admirably matched couple, even to age—eighteen and thirty was just as it should be: was it not?" was assented to with a cheerfulness which did not seem to gratify her as a looker-on might have expected it to do.

There was only one shadow on the bride's lovely face, and that came when she signed her name; and perhaps it was natural enough that Major Maitland should frown at the remembrance of the wrong done to his sister. But it was the last time Lilian would be so pained, and she was not allowed time to dwell upon it now.

When we stood aside for her and Philip to pass out, she caught my hand and drew me with them; and in that very unorthodox fashion we left the church and entered the carriage—"Mary's carriage," as Lilian termed it. There not being room enough at the cottage, the breakfast was to take place at Hill Side, and we were driven there—so far as a carriage could convey us—for we had to alight at the foot of the hill and walk the remainder of the distance.

As soon as we reached the plantations, Lilian took my face between her hands and gazed at me with anxious, tender eyes. Then, with a deep-drawn sigh of relief and a radiant smile, she murmured, "It was true, Philip; she is happy!"

"Yes, thank God!" he ejaculated.

I made it the occasion for a little jest about my truth having been doubted; and by that time some of the others had come up with us, when the bride naturally absorbed all the attention, and the rest was easy. It was the first wedding breakfast at which I had been a guest, and therefore I was not *au fait* in such matters. I can only say that if there were any little divergences from the etiquette proper upon such occasions, they were unobserved by me.

I knew that the two I most cared for in the world were made happy, and that all the rest of us were pleasant with each other, as befitted wedding guests. I was afterward told that the bride'smaids thought that they had not been sufficiently considered in being provided with one gentleman only, and he so grave a one as Robert Wentworth. And Philip's brother and his wife were said to be very stiff with us all; while Major Maitland was more anxious than it was polite to be to catch an early return train, reminding his daughters that *they* must not be the cause of his losing it, and so forth. But I looked through rose-colored spectacles, and it seemed all flowers and sunshine to me.

Dear old Mrs. Tipper and I sat together, and it did me not a little good to feel the eloquent pressure of her hand, which she now and again slipped into mine as the breakfast went on. I am, to this day, not quite sure how much Mrs. Tipper knew of the truth; but I saw that she, at any rate, guessed something of it, when, in a tremulous voice, she whispered a few words about my having given happiness to her child.

I tried a little jest about still having enough and to spare.

"Yes, my dear; that is the best of it; you really are happy. Thank God, you are reaping—"

I hurriedly commenced asking questions about Becky, who, as I had so much hoped she would, was about to become the wife of Tom. He was engaged for the garden at Hill Side, and it was arranged that he should live with his wife at the cottage. Mrs. Tipper elected to continue her cottage life; and as she had become very much attached to Becky, she was very glad to adopt my suggestion, that the married couple should live with her.

It must not be supposed that I was ignorant of anything which had transpired during my absence. I had regularly corresponded with Lilian, although I held firm to my first resolution not to return among them again until Philip and she were married, and so brought about the event at an earlier date than it might otherwise have taken place.

I need not say that Becky proved a firm ally, and faithfully kept my secret. Faithful Becky! how difficult it was for some time to get her to talk about her happiness to me! This first day of my reappearance I inquired in vain for Becky; she was not to be found. I only caught sight of her once when I was leaving Hill Side, watching me from the back staircase, her eyes and nose bearing eloquent witness to violent emotion; but when I turned to speak to her, she sped away as fast as her feet would carry her.

As soon as might be, the bride slipped away with Mrs. Tipper and me, to the increased disapprobation of the bride'smaids, who prided themselves upon being acquainted with all the necessary proprieties for such occasions. But it was not to be expected that we could allow two comparative strangers to act as tire-women to our Lilian; and we carried her off, regardless of the murmurs about its being "all wrong—quite wrong!" and so forth.

Once alone together, we three behaved—well, I will say as any other three women who love each other, and are not above having feelings, might be expected to behave under such circumstances. I contrived to satisfy Lilian, as I had satisfied her aunt, that I was no unhappy martyr, as she asked me question after question, cying me with wistful, loving eyes.

"And you will not desert us again, Mary?"

"No; I will not desert you again, Lilian."

"It is quite delightful to see her like this—quite a grand personage, with a fine carriage and livery servants, and all the rest of it; isn't it, auntie? I may now confess, Mary, that I have been the least bit afraid that your talking about living in a grand old house, with a number of attendants to do your bidding, was—"

"Was what, goosey?"

"Too much like a fairy tale; and you know

you used to talk like that sometimes, when you—when I have fancied that you were not quite happy."

"Are you satisfied at last, dearie?"

"Yes, I am—yes, quite. You look really happy." I mentally offered up a thanksgiving, as she went on, "But of course I am longing to know how it all came about. Recollect, you have promised to explain everything very exactly in your first letter. Recollect, too, that I leave dear auntie to your care; and of course we shall expect to find our sister here on our return."

I promised; and when we presently conducted the bride in her travelling-dress to the drawing-room, she was looking happy enough to satisfy Philip, who, I noticed, glanced anxiously from me to her as we entered.

We all went down the winding path with them to the carriage waiting in the road below; and sent them off with all sorts of merry speeches and good wishes, and the orthodox accompaniment of old slippers.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WAGES.

AFTER the bride and bridegroom were gone occurred the first slip in my behavior. The rest of the company had returned to the house, and I suppose I must have stood in the road—gazing in the direction the carriage had taken, the sound of the distant bells floating faintly toward me in the summer air—so long as to be unconscious of the lapse of time, when gently and lightly a hand was laid upon mine, and it was drawn under Robert Wentworth's arm.

"You are wanted up there, Mary," he said, cheerfully. "Mrs. Tipper does not, I think, find herself quite equal to Mrs. Dallas and Mrs. Trafford; to say nothing of two discontented bride'smaids, and a father who came here under protest, and was only allowed to perform half the duty he came to perform. You took that out of his hands, you know; the giving-away was virtually yours;" going on to talk amusingly of the incongruous materials which went to make up the wedding-party, and so giving me time to recover my self-command. It was very soon put to the test. There was, to begin with, some pretty banter from Mrs. Chichester to parry, when we reached the green terrace, where the guests were sitting to enjoy the air and lovely view, and from which I suddenly remembered they could see the part of the road where I had been standing.

"We began to fear you must be ill, Miss Haddon, seeing you stand so long motionless in the road. It was quite a relief to see you move at last when Mr. Wentworth joined you—it really was!"

Probably Robert Wentworth considered that this kind of thing was what I required, for he left me to it, and devoted himself to the not very easy task of trying to reconcile the two pretty bride'smaids, gravely listening to their assurances that the whole affair had been shockingly mismanaged from first to last. I soon had enough to do to reply to the patter of questions with which I was assailed from Marian and Mrs. Chichester.

Where in the world had I been hiding myself all these months? Had I really come into a large fortune, and turned Mr. Dallas off, as people said; or was it the other thing? As I did not know what "the other thing" was, I could not answer for that, but acknowledged to having been fortunate, smiling to myself as I wondered what they would think of my idea of good-fortune. Of course they would know what my real position was in time; but for the present I was mischievous enough to let them imagine any improbable thing they pleased. But there was one thing which they must not be allowed to have any doubt about, and that was my regard for Philip and Lilian, and hearty concurrence in the marriage.

"I am so glad—so very glad; because we can now speak very decidedly upon the point. People are so terribly unkind and censorious; are they not, Miss Haddon?"

"Some are, Mrs. Chichester; yet I think, on the whole, censorious people do a great deal less mischief than they are supposed to do. My experience is happily small in such matters; but I believe that censorious people are generally well known to be so, and therefore they are not capable of doing much harm."

"Then it was *not* true, Miss Haddon; I am so very pleased to be able to say so!"

"What was not true, Mrs. Chichester?"

"Oh, I would rather not repeat, really!"

"Well, I only know Caroline says she's heard it said over and over again that you ran away in despair, because you found that Mr. Dallas and Lilian were untrue to you," said Marian, less scrupulous about repeating than the other.

"That is really too ridiculous!" I ejaculated.

"But you will be able to tell your friend or friends that you did not see a lovelorn damsel to-day, Mrs. Chichester," gazing at her with steady, calm eyes.

"You certainly don't look a bit lovelorn," candidly said Marian.

"Oh no!" chimed in Mrs. Chichester. "If you will pardon the jest, I might say you looked a great deal more as though you had found a lover than lost one!" with a meaning glance in Robert Wentworth's direction.

"Will you excuse my asking if you had that dress direct from Paris, Miss Haddon?" inquired Marian.

"Paris? No; it came from Madame Michaux," I replied, happily recollecting that Jane had mentioned that name.

"Oh! that is the same thing, isn't it? She charges enormously; but one is quite sure of having just the right thing from her. I suppose you have all your dresses from her now?"

"No, not all," I said, smiling at the remembrance of my every-day attire.

"They say brown is to be the new color: the Duchess of Meck—Meck—(what's her name, Caroline? those German names are so absurd)—is wearing nothing else but brown at Homburg."

"I have been wearing brown some time," I replied, almost laughing outright.

"Some people always contrive to be in advance of the fashions," she said, a little disconcertedly. "Are they going away already, Caroline? Just inquire if the carriage is there, will you?—I see you have drab liveries, Miss Haddon; ours is changed to claret; the Marchioness

of—" Breaking off to make a reply to a few words from the little bride's maids, who, with their father, were taking themselves off from the uncongenial atmosphere. "Oh yes; went off very nicely indeed, did it not? I wanted them to have the breakfast at Fairview, or, at any rate, to have two or three of the men-servants to wait. But the party is small, certainly; and everything has been very well contrived. No one is inclined to be very critical at such times. I hope you will be able to come down to Fairview before you return to Cornwall; any time which may suit you best. You need not write; we are always prepared for visitors."

Both sisters hurriedly explained that their stay in town would be very short, and that there was not the *slightest* chance of their having a spare day.

Then there was one other little trial of my nerves—the few words which had to be spoken to Mr. and Mrs. Dallas; but pride came to my assistance, and I got through it pretty well, bearing their curious looks and gracious speeches with, at any rate, apparent stoicism. Under other circumstances I might have been somewhat amused by Mr. Dallas's remark, that for his part he wished I had not thrown Philip over, accompanied as it was by a comprehensive glance at "my carriage" waiting in the road below.

As soon as they left, I felt at liberty to whisper a loving good-bye to dear old Mrs. Tipper, with a promise to see her and clear up all mysteries on the morrow, and take my departure. In a matter-of-course way, Robert Wentworth walked with me down the path, talking in the old, pleasant, easy fashion, until he had put me into the carriage. Then, just as I was bending forward to say the one word "Home," he gave the order "Graybrook Hall."

"Wait, John."

The man stood aside; and I added to Robert Wentworth, "You know, then?"

"Of course I know," he replied, with a quiet smile.

I shrunk back. He made a gesture to the footman, gave me the orthodox bow, and I was driven away.

Not a little agitated, I asked myself how much more did he know—all? If he recognized me that night in the wood, he did know not only what I had done, but what it had cost me to do it! I was no heroine! I have shown myself as I was on Philip's wedding-day; but I had not won my peace without many a weary struggle for it. Once—three months after my departure from the cottage—I had stolen down in the darkness of evening to watch the shadows on the blinds, and perhaps catch the sound of a voice still so terribly dear to me. I saw Philip and Lilian together, and recognized that they were lovers, and then I knew that the victory was not yet won.

An hour later some one stooped over me as I lay crouched in the woods. "Are you ill? What is the matter with you, good woman?" said the familiar voice of Robert Wentworth, as he laid his hand upon my shoulder. "It is bad for you to be lying here this damp night."

I shrunk away, drawing the hood of my cloak more closely round my face, which I kept turned away. He stood still a few moments, and then, without another word, passed on. I had hither-

to always persuaded myself that he had not recognized me; but now my cheeks grew uncomfortably hot with the suspicion that he did know me, and that the passing silently on was the very thing which a delicate consideration for me would prompt him to do. I was only surprised that it had not occurred to me before. I never had succeeded in throwing dust into Robert Wentworth's eyes when I had tried so to do. I knew now that it was to him Jane Osborne had alluded when she jested about a certain friend of hers who was so interested in all that concerned me, and whom I was to know more about by-and-by. I had sometimes a little murmured in my heart at having to give up Robert Wentworth's friendship with other things, knowing the worth of it, and he had been watching over me all the time! He had traced me at once; but, respecting my desire to be lost to them all for a time, he had not obtruded himself upon me, contenting himself with obtaining an introduction to Jane Osborne, and making friends with her.

That I had been watched over, had been shown to me in more ways than one. I could almost smile now, holding the key, as I recollected many a little speech from Jane Osborne which seemed to breathe some stronger spirit than her own. Tenderly anxious about me, and inclined to pet me as she was, she would now and again spur me on to my work with a few words, which puzzled me extremely from her lips, but which I now could see she had been instigated to speak by one who knew me better than she did. But I had not much time for reflection; the drive was only three miles, and the ground very quickly got over by a couple of spirited horses. It seemed but a few minutes after I had left Robert Wentworth in the road before I was at home.

It is now time to explain what has doubtlessly suggested itself to the reader—that I had been acting as superintendent of the Home for the last twelve months. Nancy had given me a hint that Mrs. Gower had sent in her resignation of the office, having amassed a comfortable independence. My visit to town the day before I left the cottage had been for the purpose of seeing Mrs. Osborne, the foundress of the Home, and I had the good fortune to find favor in her sight. She saw that it was a crisis in my life, and was inclined to be my friend, had we two not needed each other. I went to stay with her a couple of days until Mrs. Gower's departure, and then was duly installed in the latter's place.

As I expected that Lilian would hope to trace me through Nancy, the latter was drafted into Jane Osborne's establishment for a few weeks. Consequently, when Lilian made her appearance at the gates, she was informed that Nancy had gone to some lady whose address the portress for the nonce was not acquainted with. As I hoped she would, Lilian jumped to the conclusion that I was the lady alluded to, and was thus thrown off the scent as to my whereabouts.

What shall I say, what ought I to say, about my management of the Home? I think, as little as possible. But I may state that my success has been greater than I dared to hope for, although I have had a great deal to unlearn as well as learn. All sorts of objections were in the outset made to what were termed my innovations, and perhaps they were rather daring;

but I was beginning to be able to reply to objectors by more cogent means than words.

As to myself, could anything have been more delightfully refreshing to a wearied spirit than was the greeting which I received on entering the long room on my return that afternoon—a welcome from twenty smiling faces? It is the long room to which the reader has been previously introduced, with a difference; the high brick wall before the windows is gone, and a light palisading marks the boundary of the grounds, without obstructing the view, a very fine one, of the most beautiful part of Kent. Moreover, the room was to-day *en fête*—decorated with flowers and evergreens, and with a feast, almost as grand as that at which I had just been a guest, spread upon the long tables in honor of my sister's wedding-day. I do not like to write all the kind words of "welcome" pattered out around me.

Jane Osborne and I went to my room; and while I threw off my finery and slipped on my brown dress (the only badge of distinction between me and my *protégées* on ordinary days was my mother's ring), I set her mind at rest as to the state of mind in which I had returned.

After tea we had a reading. Reading aloud or music on certain evenings of the week, while the inmates worked, was another of my innovations. That night, too, we had a new arrival. As I afterward learned, she had been sought out specially to be brought down there, and a newcomer was always under my particular care, and slept in the place of honor—a little room adjoining my own. Not a little astonished seemed the poor waif when ushered into our gayly bedecked room, and received as a welcome guest to our evening's entertainment. Perhaps my few words to that poor girl when I bade her good-night was as good a termination to Philip's wedding-day as could be desired for me.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

REST AND PEACE.

TIME has run on since then, and my life has grown fuller and happier. It was a great disappointment to Philip and Lilian to find what my boasted good-fortune really was; and nothing would reconcile them to the idea of my remaining at the Home, although they were not able to deny that the work there was congenial to me.

Marian Trafford never forgave me my one day's grandeur, and never again addressed me as an equal when we chanced to meet. She and her husband did not lead the happiest of wedded lives. On the evening of Lilian's wedding-day, Arthur Trafford was found lying on the floor of his dressing-room with an exploded pistol by his side. If he really meant to destroy himself, he had attempted it in the half-hearted way with which he did everything, having only grazed his temples and swooned with fright, and so offended his wife to no purpose. Poor Marian! her married life was neither a long one nor a happy one. No child's voice was heard at Fairview, and the miserable bickerings between the husband and wife were common gossip. She was not the kind of woman to try to conceal her dis-

appointment, and he was not the kind of man to spare her the knowledge that she had never possessed his love. Could he have foreseen, he would doubtlessly have adopted a different policy, and, at any rate, kept up some semblance of affection.

A neglected cold and improper clothing for the season brought on an attack of inflammation of the lungs, to which Marian succumbed; and after her death it was found that she had avenged herself. A lawyer was hastily summoned to her bedside, and her will made as soon as her illness was pronounced dangerous. After the funeral it was found that the endeavors of Arthur and his sister to make up for the past by extra attention at the last had been in vain. It was said that she talked to them about the large fortune which they would inherit up to almost the last hour, and their disappointment was bitter in proportion.

All Marian Trafford's wealth was left to Lilian's children. Not to Lilian, as she in a characteristic letter informed her — "in case your husband should die, and Arthur get the property after all, for he would be sure to marry you directly. Many and many a time has he taunted me about his love for you; and as good as said I wasn't to be compared! But if he married me for the sake of my money, he won't have much to boast of now. His sister too, Caroline, will be in a fine state! but she's only got herself to thank for what I have done. I *did* mean to leave something handsome to Caroline, till I overheard her talking to her brother about me, begging him to have patience a little while longer, because the doctors said that I could not last out many days unless a turn came; and saying ever such things about what she had had to put up with. What she had to put up with, indeed! when she has had such a home at Fairview, and lived upon the best of everything, without its costing her a penny! And as to presents, no one could be more generous than I have been to Caroline; and she knows it, if she would only speak the truth. If I do not get over it, I am determined that *they* shan't be any the better off! I'd sooner leave everything to Miss Had-don, though I should be loath to do that too. Fortunately, there is you, dear: you are my sister, after all, and your ma was not treated well; I have always said that. Besides, I can't forget how kind you were to me, when you thought that it was *my* ma who went wrong instead of yours. You never showed off a bit, and it's only right you should be rewarded. I haven't put Aunt Pratt into my will, because one naturally does not care about its being known that any of one's relations are common people; but I should like you to give something handsome to her, and say it came from me;" and so forth, and so forth; a letter we were all only too glad to put out of sight and out of mind as soon as possible.

The Pratts were well taken care of, and not a little astonished at Marian's liberality, as it was interpreted to them by Lilian. Arthur Trafford made a great deal of protestation in the outset about his repugnance to receiving the annuity which Philip offered; but of course he *did* receive it, and in time came to think that it was much less than he ought to have, always forestalling it. But Philip remained firm, and never increased the amount to more than was at first

offered, a sum which he considered sufficient for an idle man to live upon.

How shall I write of the married life of Philip and Lilian? I will only say with the poet,

"Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment lightly shaken ran itself in golden sands."

They were not selfish in their happiness, finding plenty of room in their hearts for those outside their own circle; which, by-the-way, was not a very small one. Need I say they held fast to "Sister Mary;" and though they could not be brought to allow that she had chosen the life she was best fitted for, they did their best to impart to it as much sunshine as they could; and, I hope, comforted themselves with the belief that my happiness was owing more to their efforts than my work. Was there a word of truth spoken in the jest, sometimes thrown playfully at me, to the effect that I was imbuing my god-child Mary with the notion that she had a "mission," as her brothers term it? She was a thoughtful, earnest child of fifteen, who had spent a great deal of her time with me, and sometimes said she would choose Aunt Mary's life before all others. It did her no harm to think so for the time being, but I knew that Aunt Mary would choose her mission to be that of a happy wife and mother. Failing that, I could only hope she would be as happy as Aunt Mary; for, notwithstanding an occasional bit of sentiment, I was as happy a woman as could be found in the three kingdoms, with a larger circle of friends than I could well count. And very proud I was of their friendship, though the majority of them could not be said to belong to the upper strata of society. I had a large correspondence, too — letters which brought tears of joy and thankfulness to my eyes, though they could not be quoted as elegant specimens of the art of letter-writing, to say nothing of their being addressed in a somewhat eccentric manner, occasionally sealed with a thimble, and so forth.

I imagined that the story of my life would run thus smoothly and evenly on to the end; but the aspect of things changed. First, we lost dear old Mrs. Tipper, who passed peacefully away, lovingly tended in her last moments by her children, as she called us. She left everything she possessed to me. Shortly afterward Jane Osborne died, bequeathing the bulk of her property for the future maintenance of the Home, and what she termed a competence to me. Five hundred a year appeared to me something more than a competence, and with my dear old friend's legacy it made me a rich woman.

Philip and Lilian would now give me no peace, insisting that I had not the shadow of an excuse for remaining at the Home. Moreover, Hill Side was waiting for me. They had been long engaged in altering and improving Fairview, and had at length taken up their abode there. It was now a large estate, sufficient ground adjoining having been purchased to make a good park; and the trees, planted fifteen years before, were beginning to look respectable. The house itself has been a great deal altered and *subdued*, as Philip calls it, a story being taken away, and wings thrown out, etc., very greatly to its improvement. It now looks a fitting home for a family of good standing, and, as Philip's brother

allows, a residence worthy of one who owns the name of Dallas.

In truth, they had outgrown Hill Side: two spirited boys and three girls, with the necessary arrangements for an education befitting their accumulating wealth, were not contemplated in the first plans; and I could not pretend to think that the change had been made solely on my account, although they threatened to let the place fall to ruin if I would not go to it. Everything was left just as it was; Lillian took nothing but her mother's portrait, and Philip a portion only of his books; and to this also there was no demurring, Fairview being furnished befitting its size. While I was still hesitating, or fancied that I was hesitating (for I found it very pleasant to dwell upon the idea of ending my days at Hill Side), Robert Wentworth put in an irresistible argument in favor of my yielding to their wishes and quitting the Home: he pointed out that I was preventing some poor gentlewoman from earning the income pertaining to the situation. I was not a little surprised at his going over to their side; but I could not, had I wished to do so, deny the reasonableness of his argument. As soon, therefore, as a lady was found to undertake the office, I resigned it.

My home-coming was made a fête-day in the village. Had a royal visitor been expected, more could not have been done in the way of preparation. The place was gay with flags and evergreens, while feasting and bell-ringing were going on all day. And the approach to my future home was arched over with flowers, and "WELCOME" repeated wherever the word could be put, but expressed more delightfully than all in the faces of Philip, Lillian, and their children. It was a busy day, too, as "befitted the coming home of Aunt Mary," laughingly said the children. A dinner was given to the grown-up people in a large tent on the green; and later on, a tea, to which children were invited, with a day's holiday to all and sports between times. Of course Becky and her husband, with their eight children, were honored guests. He is now a flourishing market-gardener, very proud of his little woman, though her happy married life does not tend to decrease the size of her mouth, since there is always a smile on her face.

We had all been very busy, and were glad to take our tea on the terrace in the cool of the evening—just sufficiently distant from the sound of merriment in the village below. After tea, Philip and Lillian, lovers still, strolled down to the green to watch the sports a while, the tired children electing to remain with Aunt Mary and Uncle Robert. My eyes followed the two as they passed down the path under the flowery arches, husband and wife in all the best sense of the words. Philip was a stately, thoughtful English gentleman, growing anxious and ambitious for his two boys; a little too ambitious, I told him, in certain directions, since they are but mortal. And his happy wife, beautiful "with all the soul's expansion," was worthy to be the mother of girls—confiding to me *her* ambition to fit them to influence the lives of honorable men.

My nieces, as they were called, were to live with me in turn. Lillian says they are very pitiful to such of their friends as have no Aunt Mary. Little Phil was very enthusiastically describing to me the advantages of my new home.

"Look here, Aunt Mary; it's the best place for larks you can imagine; beats Fairview hollow."

"Larks, Phil?"

"Well, you know. Suppose you've got some one in the library you want to make jump nearly out of his skin; just creep round the plantations and crawl under the bushes, and climb up over the stones—you must take care, though, for they are awfully slippery—and peep in at the windows with your face made up like a brigand, and point a sham pistol at him!"

I expressed a doubt as to my capacity for crawling under bushes and climbing over slippery stones; at which Phil proposed other larks, which he considered to be more within the compass of my ability. But with the dignity of thirteen, and the experience of three months at Eton, Robert gave it as his opinion that Phil's larks were not worthy of the name.

"Look here; I know a fellow," etc., etc., sinking his voice into a whisper as the two boys drew closer together; their sister Jenny, who is said to be developing a taste for larks, and is very proud of being occasionally taken into their confidence, listening with bated breath and dilating eyes.

Then Mary whispers to me that if I want to enjoy that bit out of "*Midsummer Night's Dream*," and fancy myself in the woods *really*, I must sit under the tree on the slope when the moon is rising and the shadows are deep. And before she is carried off by her nurse, Baby Lily solemnly presents me with a woollen lamb, which she thinks enough to insure my future happiness and make me "dood."

"And so you have got your rest and peace at last?" said Robert Wentworth, as he and I stood for a few moments together on the terrace watching the sunset.

"Yes," I replied, a little absently, my thoughts reverting to the old dreams of peace and rest.

"Well, it's all *couleur de rose* now. But how long will this kind of thing satisfy you?"

"What kind of thing?"

"Being worshipped and fêted in this way."

"I find it very pleasant," I demurely replied.

"You will not for long, Mary."

"Do you think I am not capable of appreciating rest and peace, then?"

He smiled. "I give you six months."

"And yet you were as urgent as the rest about my giving up work," I said.

"Yes; I wanted to see you in an independent position, and so to ascertain if certain theories of mine are correct."

"Uncle Robert, is it true? Phil says he heard mamma tell papa that she did not despair of your marrying Aunt Mary even now. Is it true—*really*?"

I saw a swift flush pass over his face, and an expression in his eyes which I had only once seen there before, as they turned for a moment upon me. Then after a few moments he said, in a low, husky voice, "Ask auntie!"

Robert Wentworth had never married, and I cannot affect to be ignorant of the cause; but in all the long years that have passed he has spoken no word of love to me. Now the child's words had stirred the depths of his nature, and shown me that time had worked no change in him.

"Is it true, auntie—is it?" asked Jenny, turning impetuously toward me.

"Uncle Robert and I love each other like old friends, dearie," I said, replying to *him* in a low, faltering voice. "But—I am too old to think of—marrying," laying my hand gently upon his, resting upon the back of a garden-seat, as I spoke.

"Well, that's what Robert and I said," frankly ejaculated Jenny. "You *are* old, and old people don't marry;" and off she ran to tell the others.

He recovered first, beginning to talk to me about a case he had in hand, and very soon contriving to get me sufficiently interested in it to enter warmly into the pros and cons with him. He was no longer a briefless barrister, having made a name in the profession, and being remunerated accordingly. I have the comfort of knowing that his life, like my own, is, on the whole, a full and happy one, although we have both had to bid adieu to certain things.

Before the six months he had given me expired, I began to find that I required change of air, and commenced absenting myself occasionally from my beautiful, luxurious home for two or three weeks at a time, and sometimes even longer, much to the surprise of Philip and Lillian, who could not understand why I should choose to go alone, and be so mysterious about the places I visited. But they became less anxious, if not less curious, when they found that I always returned cheered and refreshed by the change, and at length ceased to question me.

Robert Wentworth appeared to take it for granted that my trips were in search of the picturesque, occasionally remarking that I must be growing familiar with all the loveliest nooks in England. I flattered myself that I had for once succeeded in keeping him in the dark, and he did not suspect the real object of my journeys; but I was mistaken. I might as well have taken him into my confidence at once; and he showed me that I might, in his own fashion.

During one of my absences from Hill Side, I was under the unpleasant necessity of appearing at a police court. In obedience to a call for Mary Jones, I stepped into the witness-box, as unwilling a witness as had ever made her appearance there. I had just been trying to comfort myself with the reflection that Robert did not take up such cases, and was not at all likely to be there, when our eyes met; and from the

amused expression in his, I knew that he was about to examine me, and something of what I might expect. As he afterward informed me, he had taken up the case for the express purpose of showing me that he knew all about my movements.

"Is Mary Jones your real name?"

"It is the name I am known by."

"And you are a lodger in Biggs Court, Bethnal Green?"

"Yes; I have two rooms there."

"And go out nursing sick people in the neighborhood?"

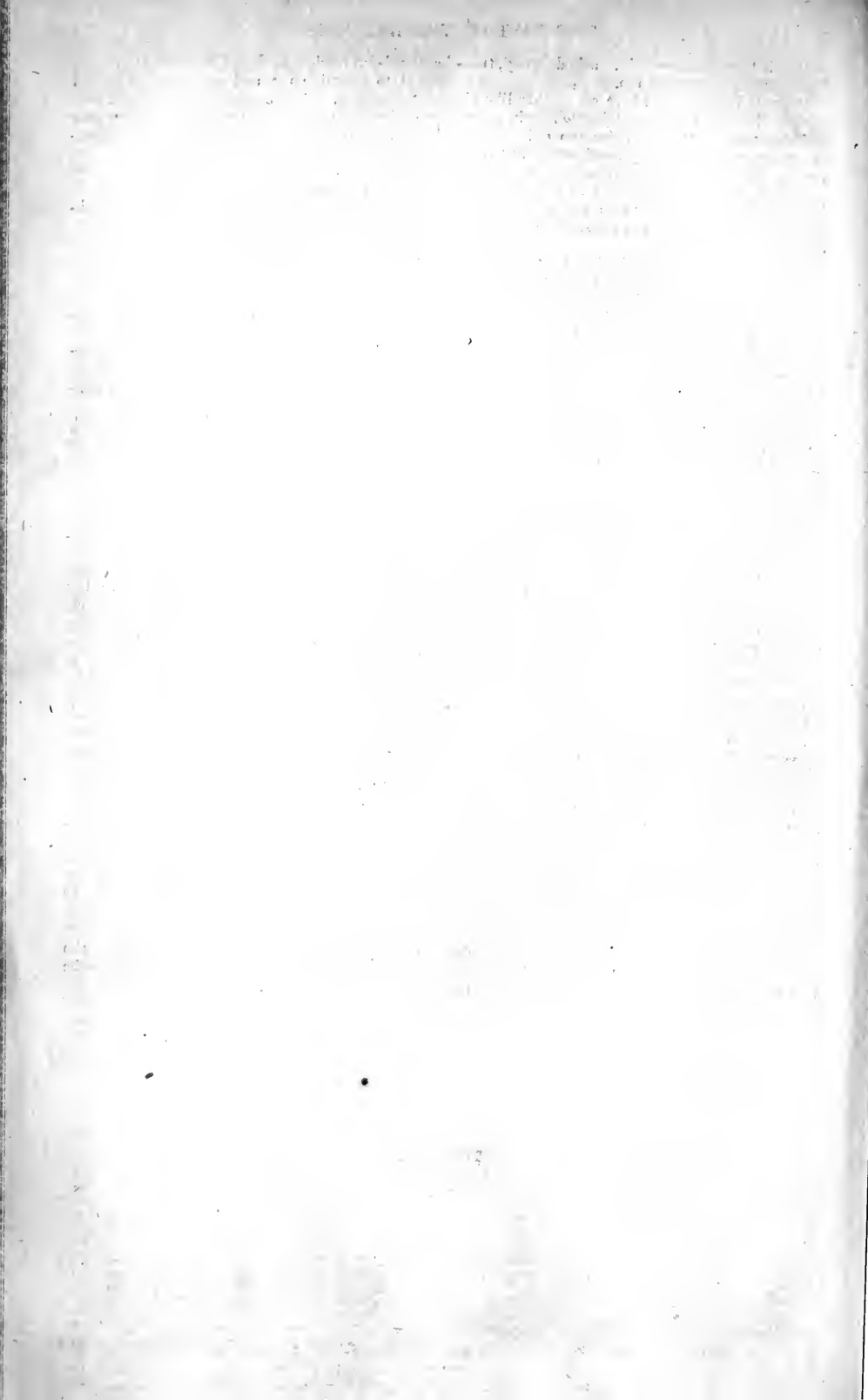
"I have occasionally done so."

"Is it a fact that you have musical evenings and readings to which you invite the poor women in the neighborhood? and that you lend money to the deserving, and give lectures to them about the management of their homes and children?"

"I do not call them lectures, sir," I replied, demurely. "But I see that you know all about my movements."

"It is my business to know," he replied, gravely, going on with the case, a charge of assault, not uncommon in the neighborhood of my town residence, to which I had been a witness, and was obliged to give evidence.

Since then we have not met very frequently. He is always an honored guest at Fairview; but he is on the Bench now, devoted to the grand, earnest life of the upright judge, and has very little time for private intercourse, although he is always ready to give us counsel and advice. It is my pride to hear of the respect and honor he wins, and to know that I have not been instrumental in impairing his usefulness in the world. Meantime, we are beginning to talk sometimes of the life beyond, with the yearning of those who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and I listen with bowed head and thankful heart to his acknowledgment that his life has not been lived in vain for himself any more than for others. This may be said only to cheer and comfort me; but I believe that it is truer than he himself thinks it to be. But I am, above all, pleased with his occasional grim little attacks upon my logic, etc., for that is to me the most convincing proof that we are still the best of friends; and we are highly amused when the children take my part, and ask him not to be hard upon Aunt Mary.



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THE PRIMROSE PATH

Mrs G Harris
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By MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF

"THE CHRONICLES OF CARLINGFORD" "AGNES" "A SON OF THE SOIL" "CARITÀ"
"FOR LOVE AND LIFE" "MISS MARJORIBANKS" "INNOCENT" &c.

"A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more."

—"the primrose path of dalliance!"
HAMLET, *Act I., Scene III.*



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5.

TO
THE VERY REVEREND THE PRINCIPAL:
THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE MODERATOR:
ONE OF THE CHIEF LIVING ILLUSTRATIONS OF FIFE:
FROM
THE HUMBLE CHRONICLER OF THE KINGDOM

Greeting!

JUNE, 1873.

THE PRIMROSE PATH.

CHAPTER I.

THE old house of Earl's-hall stands on a long strip of land between two rivers, in that county affectionately known to its inhabitants as the kingdom of Fife. It is not a great house, but neither is it an insignificant one, though fortune has brought the family low which once held some primitive state in it: a quaint, gray dwelling, not formed for modern wants. To make an ordinary dining-room and drawing-room in it would be as impossible as to content an ordinary band of modern servants with the accommodation provided in the low vaulted chambers below, which are all the old house possesses in the way of kitchen or servants' hall; but when you see its gray gable and turret projecting from among a cloud of trees, the old Scotch manor-house looks as imposing as any castle. The belt of wood round the little park, or what in Scotland is called "the policy," is old too, and as well-grown as the winds will permit. It is true that a great turnip-field, reaching up to the walls of the garden which lies on the southern side, has been thrust in between the house and the wood, and the policy is as ragged as a poor pony badly groomed and badly fed; but these are imperfections which a little money could remedy very quickly. The house itself is very peculiar in form, and consisted once of two buildings built on two sides of a court, and united by a mere screen of wall, in which is an arched door-way surmounted by a coat of arms. Probably, however, the second of these buildings, which has now fallen into ruins, was a modern addition, the other being the ancient body of the house. It is of gray stone, three stories high, with a round turret at the western side, which rises higher than the rest by one flight of the old winding stone staircase, and has a little square battlement and terrace at the top, from which you look abroad upon a wide landscape, not beautiful, perhaps, but broad and breezy, rich fields and low hills and vacant sea. To the right lies the village, with its church built upon a knoll in the rich plain, and its houses, gray, red, and blue, as the topping of chill bluish slate or rough-red generous tile predominates, clinging about the little height. Cornfields wave and nestle round this centre of rural population, and behind are the hills of Forfarshire, and a farther line of the Grampians, half seen among the mists. The softly swelling heights of the Lomonds lie in the nearer distance, and in the

foreground the Eden sweeps darkly blue, with a line of breakers showing the bar at its mouth, toward the low sand-hills and stormy waters of St. Andrews Bay, a place in which no ship likes to find itself; while over the low sweep of the sands St. Andrews itself stands misty and fine, its long line of cliff and tower and piled houses ending in the jagged edge of the ruined castle, and the tall mystery of St. Rule's—the square tower which baffles archæology. Such is the scene, rural and fresh and green, with a somewhat chill tone of color, and many a token of the winds in the bare anatomy and shivering branches of the trees, and with no great amount of beauty to boast of: yet ever full of attraction and suggestion, as such a width of firmament, such a great circle of horizon, such variety of sea and land and hills and towers must ever be.

Through the door-way in the wall, which is rich with rough but effective ornamentation, boldly cut string-courses, which look as if there might once have been some kind of fortification to be supported, you enter a little court, from which the house opens—a square court, turfed and green, and containing a well and an old thorn-tree. The ruined portion of the house, roofless and mouldering, is on the east side; the habitable part on the west, an oblong block of building; and at the well, on the day when this history opens, two figures, one old, one young, both full in the gleam of westerling sunshine which breaks over the wall. One-half of the court is in deepest shade, but this all bright, so bright that the girl shades her eyes with one hand, while with the other she pumps water into the old woman's pail, who stands with arms a-kimbo, shaking her head, and giving vent to that murmur of remonstrative disapproval, inarticulate yet very expressive, which is made by the tongue against the palate.

"Tt-tt-tt," says old Bell. "If ever there was a masterful miss and an ill-willy, and ane that will have her ain way!"

"How can I be masterful and a miss too?" said the girl, laughing. Her arm grew tired, however, with the pumping, and she left off before the vessel was half full. "There!" she said, "I'll cry on Jeanie to do the rest for you. I'm tired now."

"Oh, Miss Margaret! but you need not cry upon Jeanie. I am fit enough, though I'm old, to do that much for mysel'."

"It's the sun has got into my eyes," said the

girl; and she strayed away into the shade, and seated herself upon a heavy old wooden chair that had been placed close to the door. The sun would not have seemed unbearably hot to any one accustomed to his warmer sway; but Margaret Leslie was not used to overmuch sunshine, and what she called the glare fatigued her. Such a mild glare as it was—a suffusion of soft light, more regretful at giving so little than triumphant in delight over its universal victory! It had been rainy weather, and the light had a wistful suddenness in it, like a smile in wet eyes. Margaret withdrew into the shade. She was a girl of seventeen or so, the only daughter of this old gray house, the only blossom of youth about it except Jeanie in the kitchen, whom she did not “cry on” to help old Bell—not so much because old Bell declined the help, but because she herself forgot next moment all about it. Margaret had no idea that to say she would “cry upon” Jeanie was not the best English in the world. She was as entirely and honestly of the soil as her maid was; a little more careful, perhaps, of her dialect; not “broad” indeed, in her use of the vernacular, because of the old father upstairs, but with an accent which would make a young lady of Fife of the present day shiver, and a proud and determined aversion to the “high English” which only disapproving visitors ever spoke—ladies who looked with alarm upon her, suggesting schools and governesses. Nowhere could there have been found a more utterly neglected girl than Margaret, whom nobody, except old Bell, had ever taken any care of, all her life. Bell had been very careful of her—had kept her feet warm and her head cool, had seen that she ate her porridge all the mornings of her childhood, and that there were no holes in her stockings; but what more could Bell do? She discoursed her young mistress continually, putting all kinds of homely wisdom into her head; but she could not teach her French, or to play the “pianey,” which were the only accomplishments of which Bell was even aware.

“It’s no my fault,” the old woman said, putting out her open palms with a natural gesture of mild despair. “If I were to speak till I was hoarse (and so I have), what would that do to mend the matter? The maister he turns a deaf ear, though I was to charm ever so wisely; and Miss Margret hersel’—oh, Miss Margret hersel’, if she could learn a’ that a young leddy should, in twa minutes by the clock, it might be done; but hold her to one thing I canna—it wants somebody with more authority than me; and a bonny creature like that, and with a fortune coming till her from her mother! How is she ever to learn the pianey, or a word but broad Scots out here?”

Little Margaret cared for such lamentations. She sat softly swinging the heavy chair against the wall, which was not an easy thing to do. She had not the aspect or physiognomy adapted for a hoyden; her features were small and refined; her color more pale than warm, lighted up by evanescent rose-flushes, but never brilliant; her hair singularly fine in texture and abundant in quantity, but of no tint more pronounced than brown, the most ordinary and commonplace of shades. Her face was a cloudy, shadowy little face, but possessed by a smile which came and went in the suddenest way, brightening her and

everything about her. No particular art of the toilet aided or hindered the prettiness of her little slight figure. If she was not as God made her, she was at least as Miss Buist in the village made her—in a dress of blue serge, as near the fashion as possible, of which the peculiarity was that it was rather tight where it ought to be loose, and loose where it ought to be tight. But Margaret’s soul had not been awakened to the point of dress, and so long as it did not hurt, she minded little. Her shoes were made, and strongly made, by the village shoemaker; everything about her was of the soil. When she had swung her chair to the wall, she let it drop back again to its place, and swallowed a little yawn as she watched the water brim into the pail.

“What will I do, Bell?” she said. “What will I do next, Bell?”

(If any one thinks that Margaret ought to have said, “What shall I do?” they are to remember that this is not how we use our verbs in the kingdom of Fife.)

“Oh, Miss Margret! if you would but do one thing, just *wan* thing, without changin’ for *wan* hour by the clock!”

“You’ve been saying that as long as I can mind. You, you never change, and that’s why I like to be aye changing. There are so few things to do in the afternoon. The morning’s better—there’s something in the air. I’m always content in the morning.”

“Eh ay! you’re very content, *flichterin’* about like the birds among the trees, wan moment on this branch, the ither on that; but the afternoon, Miss Margret, the afternoon’s the time for rest—if you’ve been doing onything the fore part of the day.”

“If you want to rest,” said Margaret; “you, perhaps, Bell, that are getting old, and papa—I’ve seen *him* sleepin’.” Figure such a thing! Sleepin’! with the sun in the sky!”

“I can figure it real well,” said Bell; “it’s no often a poor body gets the chance: but just to close your eyes in the drowsy time, when a’s well redd up, the fire burning steady, and the kettle near the boil, and pussy bummung by your side, ah, that’s pleasant! it’s a kind o’ glimmer o’ heaven.”

“Heaven! the kettle on the boil, and pussy—that’s a funny heaven,” said Margaret, with a laugh.

“Weel, maybe it’s ower mateerial an image; but we’re poor fleshly creatures; and I was meaning a Sawbath afternoon, when you’ve come hame from the kirk, your Bible at hand, and a’ sae quiet,” said Bell, amending her first flight. “Jeanie stepping saft about the place, waiting till it’s time to mask the tea, and auld John on the other side of the fire, and nothing to do but to thank your Maker for a’ his mercies and think upon the sermon—if it was a sound sermon.” Bell added, after a pause, taking up her pail; “for I wouldna say they’re a’ of the kind that ye would like to mind and think upon in a Sawbath afternoon in the gloamin’.” Miss Margret, what do you say to run up the stair and see if your papaw’s wanting onything? That would aye be something to do.”

“Oh, Bell, if you only had more imagination! You always tell me to run and see if papa is wanting anything: and he never wants anything, except, perhaps, a book from the high shelf,

where they're all Greek, and I have to climb up upon the steps, and get no good."

"And whase fault's that?" said Bell, reproachfully. She had set down the pail again and paused, looking with mournful eyes at the young creature seventeen years old, who did not know what to do with herself. "Whase fault's that? Did I no beg ye on my bended knees to learn your French book?—a' wee words, as easy! I could have learned it myself; and then ye would have had a' the shelfs and a' the books open to you, and your papaw's learnin' at your finger's-end."

"Do you think French and Greek are the same?" cried Margaret. "Why, they're different print even—the a b c's different; they are no more like the same thing than you and me."

"I'm no saying they're just the same," said Bell, a little discomfited. "One thing's aye different from another. When I was learnin' it was aw, bay, say that they learned me, no clip-pit and short like your English. But the creature kens something after a'," she said to herself as she went in-doors with her pail. "A thing like that, with a' her wits about her, canna be near a learned man without learning something. But no a note o' the piany!" Bell said, with a real sense of humiliation. "For that want what could make up?"

Margaret was left alone in the little court, and she soon tired of being alone. When she had remained there for about five minutes, watching the sun shine upon the ruin opposite to her, and print all the irregularities of the wall which connected it with the house upon the broken turf of the court, she got up suddenly and went up-stairs. Musing and dreaming were the only things upon which she could spend with pleasure more than "two minutes by the clock," as Bell said. She would read, indeed, as long as any one pleased, but that was an unprofitable exercise, and tended to nothing; for what was it all but foolish stories and daff-like poetry, and play-acting and nonsense? These things were naught in the estimation of the people in the house who were anxious about Margaret's education. The only member of the household who took no thought of her education at all was the master, who sat up-stairs in solitary state. Even Jeanie, the handmaiden in the kitchen, was very anxious on Miss Peggy's account. She wanted to see her young mistress go to balls, and have pretty dresses from Edinburgh, and enjoy herself. What was the use of being bonny and young if you stayed aye in one auld house and nobody saw ye? Jeanie asked herself. And this was a question which much disturbed and occupied her mind. Old John, too, who was Bell's husband, and the male factotum, as she was the female, had his anxieties about Miss Peggy. When she began to want to have pairties and young folk about her, what should they all do? John demanded. He would be willing, and so would Bell, to "put themselves about" to the utmost; but what was to be done for chiney and plate? Wan dozen of everything might be enough for the family, but what would that do for a pairty? So that John's mind was disturbed also. But old Sir Ludovic, what did he mind? Give him a book, and ye might mine the cellars, and throw your best bomb-shells at

the tower, and he would never hear ye. Such was the general opinion of the house.

There was no entrance-hall in this primitive house; but only a little space at the "stair-foot," the bottom of the well through which the spiral staircase wound its narrow way; but though it was dark, and the twist of the unprotected steps a little alarming to a stranger, Margaret ran up as lightly as a bird. At about half the height of an ordinary flight of stairs there were two doors close to each other, forming a little angle. One of these Margaret pushed open softly. It led into a long room, running all the length of the building, panelled wherever the wall was visible, and painted white, as in a French house: one side, however, was covered entirely with book-shelves. The depth of the recesses in which the small windows were embedded showed the thickness of the wall. One at each end and one in the middle were all that lighted the long room, two or three others which had belonged to the original plan having been blocked up on account of the window tax, that vexatious impost. In the centre of the room stood a large old jappaned screen, stretched almost across the whole breadth, and dividing it into two. On the south side, into which the door opened, a large writing-table was placed upon the old and much-worn Turkey-carpet which covered the middle of the floor; and seated at this, but with his back to the sunshine, which was pouring in, sat an old man in a chair, reading. The window behind him and the window in the side each poured its stream of sunshine between the deep cuttings of the ancient walls, five or six feet thick, but neither of these rays of warmth and light touched this solitary inhabitant. He was so much absorbed in his reading that he did not hear the door open. Margaret came in behind him and stood in the sunshine, the impersonation of youth—the light catching her at all points, gleaming in her eyes, bringing color to her cheek, making her collar and the edge of white round her hands blaze against the darkness of her dress. But no ray touched the old man in his chair. He was as still as if he had been cut out of gray marble; his face motionless, the movement of his eyes as he read, the unfrequent movement necessary to turn the page, being all the sign of life about him. The book he was reading was a large old folio, propped up upon a sort of reading-desk in front of him. A large wide garment, something between a long coat and a dressing-gown, of dark-colored and much-worn velvet, and wrapped round his thin person, gave it some dignity; and he wore a little black velvet skull-cap, which made his fine head and thin white locks imposing. Margaret stood breathless, making no sound for a moment, and then said, suddenly, "You look like Archimede in the cave, papa!"

The old man made a faint movement of surprise; a wrinkle of impatience came into his forehead, a momentary smile to his lip. "Yes, yes, my little Peggy; go and play," he said. She stood for a moment behind him, hesitating, looking round her with eager eyes in search of something, anything, to interest her. She was neither surprised nor wounded to find herself thus summarily disposed of: she was used to it. Finally, seeing nothing likely to interest her, Margaret turned lightly away, and disappeared through a second door which was close to the one

by which she had entered. This brought her into a small rounded room, with one window, a little white-panelled Scotch-French boudoir, with a high mantel-piece and small antique furniture—a little square of Turkey-carpet on the floor, a pretty old marquetry cabinet, and some high-backed chairs of the same covered with broadened silk from some great-grandmother's gown. Margaret knew nothing about the value of these old furnishings. She thought the walnut-wood table, with its elaborate clustered legs, a much finer article, though it was often in her way. There were some old pictures on the walls, some books, and more ornament and grace than in all the rest of the house put together. What did Margaret care? She sang an old tune to herself, drumming with her fingers upon the window-sill, and thinking what she should do. Then she drew open a drawer in the cabinet and took from it some old fanny-work, faded but fine, with a bundle of wools and silks in the same condition. It was the relic of some old lady's industry (Lady Jean, old Bell said; but how should she know?) which had been found in one of the periodical routings out of old presses and drawers in which Margaret delighted. The linen on which the work was half done was yellow and the colors faded, but it had struck the girl's fancy, and she had carried it off with her to finish (this time a hundred years, Bell said, satirically). Margaret took it out now and laid it on the table; then she went flying up the stone stairs, and all over the rooms, to find her thimble and her scissors, which were not to be found.

And while she tries to find these, what can we do better than let the reader know who old Sir Ludovic was, and how he came to have so young a child? Margaret's foot flying up-stairs, and the sound she made of doors and drawers opening, and now an impatient exclamation (for the way thimbles hide themselves and refuse to be found!) and now a little snatch of song, was all that was audible in the still old house. Bell and John and Jeanie in the kitchen had their cracks, indeed, as they took their tea; but sounds did not travel easily up the spiral stair, and the long room with its one inhabitant was as void of all movement as was the vacant little white-panelled chamber with Lady Jean's old work thrown on the table. All silence, languor, stillness; and yet one creature in the house to whom stillness was as death.

CHAPTER II.

THE LESLIES had been settled at Earl's-hall since before the memory of man. Now they were related to other LESLIES in Fife; and out of it, I do not pretend to say. But this family itself was old enough to have carried any amount of honors, much less the poor baronetcy which was all it had got out of the sometimes lavish hand of fame. The family was old enough to have supported a dukedom, but not rich enough. Sir Ludovic had got but a moderate fortune from his father, and that which he would transmit to his son would be considerably less than moderate. Indeed, it was not worth calling a fortune at all. When the Baronet began his life, the policy was a real policy, a pretty small park enough, with its girdle of hardy trees. No tur-

nip-field then thrust its plebeian presence and odor between the house and its own woods; the garden was kept up with care, the other part of the house was still habitable and inhabited, and the greatest people in the country did not scorn to dine and dance in the rooms so well adapted for either purpose. But of all these good things, the rooms and old Sir Ludovic were all that remained. He had not done any particular harm at any time, nor had he wasted his means in lavish living, and nobody was so much surprised as he when his money was found to have been spent. "What have I done with it?" he had asked all his life. But nobody could tell; he had no expensive tastes—indeed, he had no tastes at all, except for books, and his own library was a very good one. It was true, he had indulged in three wives and three families, which was inconsiderate, but each of the wives had, greatly to the comfort of her respective children, possessed something of her own. Time went and came, however, taking these ladies away in succession, but leaving Sir Ludovic still in his great high-backed chair, older, but otherwise not much different from what he had ever been. The eldest son, also called Ludovic, was the only one now surviving of the first marriage. He was a man of forty-five, with a family of his own; a hard-working lawyer in Edinburgh, with no great income to keep up his position, and little disposed to welcome the burden of his father's little tide when it should come. A baronetcy, and an old house altogether uninhabitable by a family, and entirely out of modern fashion—what should he make of these additions when his father died? He had made his own way as much as if he had been a poor school-master's son, instead of the heir of an ancient and important family. He could not even take his children home to the old place, or give them any associations with it, for there was no room at Earl's-hall. "Your father might as well be in Russia," his wife sometimes said when she wanted a change for a little boy who was delicate. And privately, Mr. Leslie had made up his mind to sell the place, though it had been so long in the family, when Sir Ludovic died.

Of the second family there were two remaining, two daughters, one of whom had been married and had settled in England; the other, who had not married, living with her. They were twins, and some five years younger than their elder brother. And neither did they come often to Earl's-hall. The same objection was in everybody's way—there was no room for them. And Sir Ludovic disliked letter-writing. They came occasionally to see their father, and to hold up their hands and shake their heads at the way in which little Margaret was being brought up. But what could these ladies do? To live at Earl's-hall was impossible, and to go and stay in a little cottage in the Kirkton, all for the sake of a small step-sister, and without even any security that they could really be of any use to her, was something more of a test than their lukewarm family affection could bear. And they hesitated about recommending a governess; for with an old gentleman so much addicted to marriage, who could tell what might happen? Though he was seventy-five, he was the same man as ever, and very fascinating when he chose to exert himself; and to have a new Lady Les-

lie would be a still greater horror than to have a young rustic for a step-sister. And then the child would be rich. It does not require much learning, as Mrs. Harcastle says, to spend fifteen hundred a year.

So that Margaret was left alone. Her mother had been the richest of all Sir Ludovic's wives. She had been—more wonderful still—a young beauty, courted and flattered, and how it was that she passed over all her younger admirers and fixed upon a man of fifty-five, a poor old Scotch baronet, nobody could divine. But she did so, and came home with him to Earl's-hall, and brightened it a while with her youth and her wealth, and would have done wonders for the old house. Nothing less had been intended than to rebuild the ruin, though Sir Ludovic himself discouraged this, as the house, he reminded her, must pass into other hands. But poor Lady Leslie's fine projects came to a premature end, by means of a bad cold which she caught just after her little girl was born. She died, and the last gleam of prosperity died away with her. Margaret, it was true, was rich, and the allowance her trustees made her was no small help even now to the impoverished household; though, indeed, the trouble these trustees gave, her father thought, was more than the money was worth. They wrote to Sir Ludovic about her education till he was roused to swear at, though not to profit by, the perpetual remonstrance.

"Education! what would they have at her age? A mere child," he said.

"Eh, Sir Ludovic! but she's sixteen," Bell said, who was the only one in the house who ever ventured to keep up an argument with her old master.

"Pshaw!" the old man said; for what is sixteen to seventy-five? And besides, did he not see her before him a slim stripling of a girl, flitting about in perpetual motion, a singing voice, a dancing step, a creature never in the same place, as Bell said, for "two minutes by the clock"? What does that kind of small thing want with education? Sir Ludovic liked her better without it, and so perhaps would most people; for are not the fresh wonder, curiosity, and intelligent ignorance of a child its most captivating qualities? If we could but venture to take the good of them with a clear conscience and no thought of what the child will say to us when it ceases to be a child! Sir Ludovic had this courage. He did not think much of his duties to Margaret. She had duties to him—to be always pretty and cheerful, not to speak too broad Scotch, to get his books down for him when he wanted them, to put everything ready on his table, pens, pencils, and note-book, in case he should want to write something (which he never did), and to be neat and in order at meal-times. In this one particular he certainly did his duty. Margaret had not the privilege of being untidy, which is allowed to most neglected heroines. Sir Ludovic required scrupulous neatness, hair that shone, and garments that were spotless, and ribbons as fresh as the day. Should not we all like just such a creature about us, fair as a new-blown rose, with a voice so toned and harmonious, a step with rhythm in it, a pair of eyes running over with understanding and interest, and no education to speak of? If only the

creature would not arise upon us after and upbraid us for its want of knowledge! But of this risk Sir Ludovic never dreamed. She could read, he supposed, for he saw her reading; and she could write, he knew, for he had seen her do it. What could they want more?

Thus they lived, not uncontented, from year to year. No one told Margaret to read, but she did so, perhaps with all the more pleasure because nobody told her. She read all the best poetry that is written in English, and a great deal that was not the best. She was so great in history that she had been a Lancastrian and taken an active, even violent, part on the side of her namesake, Margaret of Anjou, as long as she could remember—a more violent part even than she took for Queen Mary, though to that also she was bound as a true Scot. She had read Clarendon and Sir Thomas Brown, and Burton on "Melancholy" (not caring much for that) and an old translation of Froissart, and "Paul and Virginia," and Madame Cottin's "Elizabeth," and "Don Quixote," all in translations; so that her range was tolerably wide; and everything came natural to Margaret, the great and the small. Needless to say that all Sir Walter was hers by nature, as what well-conditioned Scots person of seventeen has not possessed our homelier Shakespeare from his or her cradle? Whether she loved best the Spanish Don, or Lord Falkland, or Sir Kenneth in the "Talisman," was not to her mind perfectly clear. In this respect she was not so sure about Shakespeare. His lovers and heroes did not satisfy her youthful requirements; she loved Henry the Fifth, and Faulconbridge, and Benedick, but was not at all satisfied about the relations between Hamlet and Ophelia, naturally standing by her own side, and thinking that poor maiden badly used: which is as much as to say that the spell of story was still strong upon her, though the poetry went to her head all the same. These were the books Sir Ludovic saw her reading—but he took no notice and no oversight. He did not think of her at all as a responsible creature to be affected one way or other by what she read, or as undergoing any process of training for the future. The future! what is that at seventy-five? especially to a man who amiably and without evil intention has always found himself the centre of the world! It is like the future of a child—to-morrow. He did not want to pry any further. What was to come, would come without any intervention of his. Had his child been penniless, probably he would have thought it necessary to remember that in all probability (as he expressed it) she would survive him. But she was rich, and where was the need of thinking? The great thing was that there was no room. The bedrooms in the house were so few. Where could they put a governess, he asked Bell; and even Bell, though full of resources, could not reply. There was one good-sized room which Sir Ludovic himself occupied, and another quaint small panelled chamber in which Margaret was very snug and cosy, but beyond these scarcely any bedchamber in the house was in a proper state of repair. What could any one say against so evident a fact? "We could dine fifty folk," Bell said, half proudly, half sadly, "and we could gie a grand ball after that up the stair; but pit up one single gentleman that is no very particular, that's all we could do beside."

It was a curious state of affairs. The two long rooms, one above the other, were the whole house.

Of the wealth which Margaret was to inherit, she knew absolutely nothing. There was a house "in England," a vague description which the girl had never much inquired into, seeing that till her twenty-first birthday it was very unlikely that she would have anything whatever to do with it. In the mean time it served a very pleasant purpose in her life. It was the scene of so many dreams and visions of that future which was everything to Margaret, that it could not be said to be an unknown place. She built it and furnished it, and planted trees and invented glades about the unrevealed place, such as in reality it could not boast of. Everything that she thought most beautiful in her small experience of things, or which she found in her considerable experience of books, she placed in this distant mansion, where all manner of pleasant verdure was, which was not to be found in Scotland, flowers and fruits, and green lawns, and abundant foliage, and sunshine such as never shone in Fife. She made pictures of it, and dreamed dreams, but no troublesome dash of reality disturbed the vision. She was the lady of the manor, a title which pleased her fancy hugely, and which she wove into many a fancy; but it was all as visionary as if she had found the Grange in a novel and appropriated it.

If anything could have been more unlike an English manor-house than the quaint old dwelling in which her childhood had been passed, it was the dreams Margaret wove of her future home. Claude Melnotte's palace was more like that sunshiny fancy. No castle in Spain or in the air was ever more unreal. There wants no education to teach a girl how to dream, and the less she knows, so much the more gorgeous and delightful becomes the imagination. But naturally this was a branch of her training totally unknown to everybody connected with her. Sir Ludovic knew a great deal, but had not a notion of that branch of human effort; neither, it may well be supposed, did Bell, though her instincts were clearer. When she saw her young mistress sit abstracted, her eyes far away, a half smile on her lips, Bell knew that there must be something going on within the small head. What was it? There were no young men, or, as Bell called them, "lands," about that could have caught her youthful eye. Bell knew that the romance of life begins early, and had some glimmering of recollection that before any "lands" appear on the horizon in reality, there are flutters of anticipation in maiden souls, dreams of being wooed like the rest, "respectit like the lave." But Margaret had seen none of the rural wooings which are a recognized institution in Scotland, those knocks at the window and whippers at the door, which add the charm of mystery to the never-ending romance. Bell had taken care even that Jeanie's "land" and his evening visits should be kept out of the young lady's notice. But then, if it was not the glimmer of poetic love that flickered on the horizon, what was it? And except Bell, and perhaps Jeanie, no one had noticed the soft abstracted look that sometimes stole into Margaret's eyes, or knew her capacity for dreams. Mr. Leslie, when he came, took but little notice of his step-

sister. He had a daughter who was older than she, indeed Margaret had become a great-aunt, to the amusement of everybody, during the previous winter. Her brother took very little notice of her. When he looked at her, he breathed a private thanksgiving that she was provided for, and would not be an additional burden upon him when his father died. It was only when Sir Ludovic was ill or in difficulty, that Mr. Leslie came, and the reflection, "Thank Heaven I have not the lassie to think of," was the foremost sentiment in his breast. He had plenty of his own to exhaust all the fund of interest in his heart. She had no business ever to have been, this young creature whose presence in the old house made a certain difference naturally in all the arrangements; but, being there, the chief fact was this fortunate one that she was provided for. So far as Margaret was concerned, this was the only thing in his thoughts.

As for Mrs. Bellingham and her sister, Miss Leslie, they lived a long way from Fife. They were ladies who travelled a great deal, and spent all they had to spend in making their life pleasant. Mrs. Bellingham was childless, and a widow, so that her married life did not count for much, though she herself regarded the elevation it gave her with much contentment. Now and then, instead of going to Switzerland or the Italian lakes, they would come to Scotland, making expeditions into the Highlands, and preserving everywhere their character as British tourists. Once there had been some question between them of inviting Margaret to accompany them on one of these expeditions, which it was thought might do her good and improve her manners, and give her a little acquaintance with the world. But on more mature reflection, it became apparent that the maid whom the two ladies shared between them, when on their travels, was by no means disposed to undertake the packing and toilet of a third.

"Many a girl would be glad to give a little assistance herself rather than trouble, for the chance of such a treat," Miss Leslie said, who was the weak-minded sister; "and in that way I really think we might manage—if dear Margaret was a sensible girl."

"Margaret is not a sensible girl, and we could not manage at all, and I won't have Forrester put about," Mrs. Bellingham said, who took the management of everything upon her. "Besides, a girl—she would be an endless trouble to you and me. We should have to change our route to let her see this thing and that thing, and you would be afraid she did not enjoy herself, and the Lord knows what besides. There are many things in conversation even that have to be stopped before a girl. No, no; it would never do."

And thus one hope for Margaret's improvement came to an end. A similar failure happened about the same time in Edinburgh. When Mrs. Ludovic got that German governess, who was at once her pride and her dread, she was so much affected by the grandeur and superiority as to suggest an arrangement to her husband by which his little sister might be benefited.

"It appears to me that we, who have such advantages, ought, perhaps, to share them a little with others that are not so well off. There

is little Margaret at the Hall. What do you think? Sir Ludovic might send her to us to share the children's lessons. Fräulein is an expensive luxury, and a little help with her salary would be no harm. And if Margaret had six months with our girls, it would do her a great deal of good; if it was only to learn German—"

"What does she want with German? What good would it do her to learn German?" said Ludovic, testily.

"Well, I'm sure, Ludovic, that's not an easy question. I never thought you were one to ask for an immediate result. I am sure you all say learning anything is an advantage, whether the thing they learn is any use or not. I do not always see it myself," said Mrs. Leslie; "but many is the time I've heard you all say so. And if we could do Margaret a good turn, and at the same time save something on our own expenses—"

"Do Margaret a good turn! I do not see what claim she has on me. She has plenty of people to look after her if they would do their duty. Trustees of her money, and her mother's relations, not to speak of my father himself, who has plenty of energy left when you cross him. Indeed, if you come to that, Jane and Grace are nearer to her than I."

"Because the second is nearer the third than the first is," Mrs. Ludovic said, who had some sense of humor. But she added, "Well! I never made any attempt to fathom you Leslies but I was baffled. I think there was never a set of people like you. I hope I'll never be so left to myself as to try again."

"We Leslies! The most of the Leslies nowadays are your own bairns."

"That's true, and more's the pity," said the lady, discharging an arrow as she went away.

And thus another attempt to do something for Margaret came to nothing. Everything failed. It was nobody's business, perhaps. The trustees were strangers who did not know. Her father was old, and did not care to be troubled, and liked her best as she was. Her brothers and sisters, what had they to do with it? They were not their little sister's keeper. So between them all she was left to grow as she pleased, like a flower or a weed, nobody responsible for her, whatever might happen. Even a School Board, had there been one in the parish, what right would it have had to interfere?

CHAPTER III.

MARGARET searched a whole half-hour for her thimble, which was found at the end of that time in the pocket of a dress which she had not worn for a week; but when she had found it, she no longer thought of Lady Jean's work. That purpose had faded altogether from her mind. She forgot even what she wanted the thimble for, and being seized with a sudden fancy for remedying the disorder of her drawers, immediately set to work to do so, with a zeal more fervent than discreet; for as soon as she had turned the top drawer out, scattering all her light possessions, her collars and ribbons and bits of lace, out upon her bed, she was summoned by the bell for dinner, and thought of them no

more. Margaret hastily arranged her hair, put on a bit of fresh ribbon, and rushed down-stairs; for to keep Sir Ludovic waiting was a sin beyond excuse. On the other side of the great japanned screen which divided the room into two, stood the table, laid with scrupulous care, and served by John in his rusty but trim and sober "blacks," with a gravity that would not have misbecome an archbishop. Sir Ludovic had put down his book, he had washed his hands, and he was ready. He stood dignified and serious, almost as serious as John himself in the centre of the room, by the edge of the screen. *J'ai failli attendre* might be read in the curve above his eyebrows; and yet he received his erring child with perfect temper, which was more than could be said for John, who gloomed at her from under his heavy eyebrows.

"Oh, papa, I am sorry," Margaret began. "I was busy—"

"If you were busy, that is no reason for being sorry; but you should not forget hours—they are our best guide in life," said her father. But he was not angry; he took her by the hand and led her in, handing her to her seat with stately ceremony. This daily ceremonial, which Margaret hated, and would have done anything to avoid, was the means by which Sir Ludovic every day made his claim of high-breeding and unforgotten courtliness of demeanor, in presence of men and angels. Whosoever might think he had forgotten what was due to his daughter as a young lady and a Leslie, and what was due to himself as a gentleman of the old school, not a modern man of no manners, here was his answer. John looked on at this solemnity with gloomy interest; but Margaret hated it. She reddened all over her youthful countenance, brow and throat. Between the two old men she moved, passive but resentful, to her seat, and slid into it the moment her father released her, with ungrateful haste to get done with the disagreeable ceremony. They were "making a fool of her," Margaret thought. Though it occurred every evening, she never got less impatient of this formula. Then Sir Ludovic took his own place. He was not tall, but of an imposing appearance, now that he was fully visible. In the other half of the room, where all his work was done, he sat invariably with his back to the light. But here he was fully revealed. His white locks surrounded a fine and remarkable face, in which every line seemed drawn on ivory. He had no color save in his lips, and the wonderful undimmed dark eyes, darkly lashed and eyebrowed, which shone in all the lustre of youth. With those eyes Sir Ludovic could do anything—"wile a bird from the tree," old Bell said; and, indeed, it was his eyes which had beguiled Margaret's mother, and brought her to this old-world place. But Margaret was used to them; perhaps she had not that adoring love for her father which many girls have; and especially at dinner, after the little ceremony we have recorded, she was more than indifferent to, she was resentful of his attractions. At that age he might have known better than "to make a fool," before John, day after day, of his little girl.

This day, however, the dinner went on harmoniously enough; for Margaret never ventured to show her resentment, except by the sudden

angry flush, which her father took for sensitiveness and quickly moved feeling. He talked to her a little with kind condescension, as to a child.

"You were busy, you said; let us hear, my little Peggy, what the busy-ness was."

"I was doing—a great many things, papa."

"Ah! people who do a great many things all at once are apt to get into confusion. I would do one thing, just one thing at a time, my Peggy, if I were a little girl."

"Papa!" said Margaret, with another wave of color passing over her, "indeed, if you would look at me, you would see that I am not a little girl."

"Yes, you have grown a great deal lately, my dear. I beg your pardon. It is hard to teach an old person like myself where babyhood ends. You see, I like to think that you are a little girl. Eh, John? we like something young in the house; the younger the better—"

"No me, Sir Ludovic," said John.

He was very laconic, wasting no words; and Margaret felt that he disapproved of her youth altogether. But this restored her to herself, and she laughed. For John, though morose in outward aspect, was, as she very well knew, her slave actually. This made her laugh, and the two old men liked the laugh. It brought a corresponding light into Sir Ludovic's fine eyes, and it melted a little the morose muscles about John's closely shut mouth.

"But I am not so very young," she said. "Jeanie's sister, who is just my age, has been in a place for a long time; and most people are considered grown-up at my age. You ought not to make a fool of me."

"My little Peggy," said Sir Ludovic, "that is an incorrect expression. Nobody could make a fool of you except yourself. It is Scotch, my dear, very Scotch, which is a thing your sisters Jean and Grace have already often warned me against. You are very Scotch, they tell me."

"Set them up!" ejaculated old John, under his breath.

Margaret reddened with ready wrath.

"And I *am* Scotch," she said. "How could I speak otherwise? They were always going on about something. Either it was my shoulders, or it was my hair, or it was my tongue—"

"Your tongue! My Peggy, your idioms are strange, it must be allowed; but never mind. What had they to say against your hair? It is very pretty hair. I don't see any ground to find fault there."

"Oh, it was not in the fashion," said Margaret. "You know, papa, you like it smooth, and that is not the fashion now; it ought to be all towzy, like my little dog, and hanging in my eyes."

"The Lord preserve us!" said old John. He was in the habit of giving utterance to his sentiments as constrained by some internal movement *plus fort que lui*; and no one ever interfered with this habit of his. "What next?" said the old man, with a shrug of his shoulders behind his master's chair.

"Then you must continue to be old-fashioned so long as I live," said Sir Ludovic. "Your sisters are very well-meaning women, my Peggy; but even when you are as clever as Mrs. Bellingham and as wise as Miss Leslie, you will not have fathomed everything. We'll leave the

philosophy to them, my little woman, and you and I will manage the hair-dressing. That is evidently the point in which our genius lies."

Margaret looked up, somewhat jealously, to see whether she was again being made "a fool of;" but as no such intention appeared in her father's face, she returned to the consideration of her dinner. It was not a heavy meal. A little fish—"haddies," such as were never found but in the Firth, little milk-white flounders, the very favorites of the sea, or the homely herring, commonest, cheapest, and best of fish. But then, perhaps, they require to be cooked as Bell knew how to cook them. No expensive exotic salmon, turbot, or other aristocrat of the waters ever came to Sir Ludovic's table. Let them be for the vulgar rich, who knew no better. The native product of his own coasts was good enough, he would say, in mock humility, for him. And then came one savory dish of the old Scotch *cuisine* now falling out of knowledge; no vulgar dainty of the haggis kind, but stews and *ragouts* which the best of *chefs* would not disdain. This was all; the *plat doux* has never been a regular concomitant of a Scotch dinner; and Sir Ludovic was a small eater, and had his digestion to consider. It was not, therefore, a very lengthened meal; and as six o'clock was the dinner-hour at Earl's-hall, there were still several long hours of sunshine to be got through before night came.

Now was the time when Margaret felt what it was to be alone. The long summer evening, loveliest, most wistful, and lingering hour of all the day, when something in the heart demands happiness, demands that which is unattainable one way or another—is it possible to be young, to be void of care, to possess all the elements of happiness, without wishing for something more, a visionary climax, another sweetness in those soft, lingering, visionary hours? Margaret did not know what she wanted, but she wanted something. She could not rest contented as her father did, to sit over a book and see through the west window (when he chanced to look up) the flush of the sunset glories. To feel that all this was going on in the sky, and nothing going on within, nor anything that concerned herself in earth and heaven, was not to be borne.

The little withdrawing-room—the East Chamber, as it was called, though its window faced to the south—was already all dim, deserted by the sunshine. Lady Jean's work lay on the table, where Margaret had thrown it in the afternoon, but nothing living, nothing that could return glance for glance and word for word. It was but seven o'clock, and it would be ten o'clock, ten at the earliest, before night began to fall. Margaret got her hat and ran down-stairs. She did not know what she should do, but something she must do. The little court was by this time quite abandoned by the sunshine, the body of the house lying between it and the west; but all the sky overhead was warm with pink and purple, and Bell was seated outside, with her knitting dropped upon her lap. Jeanie had gone out to milk the cow; and even old John had strolled forth with his hands behind him, to see, he said, how the "pitawties" were getting on. The "pitawties" would have got on just as well without his supervision, but who could resist the loveliness of the evening light?

"Our John he's awa', like Isaac, to meditate among the fields at even-tide," Bell said. "Eh, but it's an auld custom that! and nae doubt auld Sawra, the auld mither, would sit out at the la' door, and ponder in her mind just like me."

"But John is not your son, Bell," said Margaret, with the literal understanding of youth.

"Na, I never had a son, Miss Margaret, naething but wan daughter, and she's been married and gone from me this twenty years. Eh, my dear, we think muckle of our bairns, but they think little and little enough of us. I might as well have had nane at all but for the thought."

To this Margaret made no reply, her mind not taking in the maternal relation. She stood musing, with her eyes afar, while Bell went on:

"They say a woman has no after-pain when her first bairn's born, because of the Virgin Mary, that had but wan. But ay me, I've had mony an after-pain, and her too, poor woman, though no the same kind. I think of her mony a day, Miss Margaret, how she would sit and ponder things in her heart. Eh, they would be so ill to understand—till the time came."

Still Margaret said nothing. The old woman pondered the past, but the girl's brain was all throbbing and thrilling with the future. The sound of something coming was in her ears, a ringing, a singing, a general movement and flutter of she knew not what. To Bell the quiet was everything; to Margaret, she herself was the universe, and all the horizon was not too big to hold the rustling pinions and approaching foot-balls of the life to come.

"I think I will take a walk down the road," she said, suddenly, over Bell's head.

"Take a hap with you, in case it should get cauld. Sometimes there's a wind gets up when the sun goes down. And you'll no bide too long, Miss Margaret," Bell called after her as she ran lightly away.

Margaret did not care for the wind getting up, nor foresee the possibility of the evening chillness after the warmth of the day. It was always chilly at night so near the sea; but seventeen years' experience to the contrary had not dispelled Margaret's conviction that as the weather was at one bright moment, so would it always be.

The road down which Margaret went was not very attractive as a road. The hedges were low and the country bare. It is true that even the rigor of Fife farming had not cut down the wild roses, which made two broken lines of exquisite bloom on either side of the way. Long branches all bloomed to the very tips waved about in the soft air, and concealed the fact that the landscape on either side was limited to a potato-field on the right and a turnip-field on the left. But the wild roses were enough for Margaret. Were they not repeated all over the skies in those puffs of snowy vapor tinted to the same rose hue, and in the girl's cheeks, which bloomed as softly, when the exercise, and the flowering of the flowers, and the reflection of the sunset reflections had got into her young veins? The color and sweetness rapt her for a moment in an ecstasy, mere beauty satisfying her as it does a child. But human nature, even in a child, soon wants something more, and in Margaret the demand came cry quickly. She forgot the love-

liness all at once, and remembered the something that was wanted, the blank that required filling up. She turned aside into a by-way, along the edge of a cornfield, with a sigh. The corn was not high, as it was but June, and when she turned her face away from the sunset, the world paled all at once all around her.

Margaret went on more slowly, unconsciously. She went on hanging her young head till she came to a brook at the end of the field, over which there was but a plank for a bridge. The brook (she called it a burn) ran between two fields, and on one side of it grew an old ash-tree, its trunk lost among the bushes of the hedge. Here a post, which had been driven into the ground to support the homely bridge, made a kind of seat upon which the wayfarer might pause and look at the homely yet pretty Kirkton, with its old church on the brae. Margaret herself had intended to rest upon this seat. But when she was half-way across the plank, a sudden sound so startled her that she lost her footing; and though she saved herself from plunging into the burn altogether by a despairing grasp at the bushes, yet she got her foot fast imbedded in the damp bank, and there stuck, to her infinite embarrassment and disgust. Some one started from the seat at the sound of the suppressed cry she gave, and rushed to the rescue. It was, need it be said, a young man? yet not exactly of heroic guise.

Margaret, crimson to the hair, and feeling herself the most gawky, the most awkward, the most foolish of distressed damsels, her ungloved hand all torn and pricked with the thorns of the branch which she had caught at, her foot held fast in the tenacious clay, did not know what kind of hoyden, what rude village girl, red and blowzy, she must have looked to the stranger. She looked a nymph out of the poetic woods, a creature out of the poets, a celestial vision to him. He sprang forward, his heart beating, to offer his hand and his assistance. Was it his fault? He feared it was his fault; he had startled her, moving just when she was in the act of crossing the plank. He made her a thousand apologies. It was all his doing; he hoped she would forgive him. He expended himself so in apologies that Margaret felt it necessary to apologize too.

"It was me that was silly," she said. "Generally, I never mind a sudden sound. What should it matter? Nobody would do me harm, and there's no wild beasts, that I should be so silly. Oh, it's nothing; and it was all my fault."

"You are the queen in your own country. There should be nothing in your path to startle you."

"Oh no, I'm not the queen," said Margaret, laughing. "I have to take my chance like other folk. You are a stranger here," she said, with friendly innocence. The fact that she was, if not the queen, as she said, yet at least a princess, the first young lady hereabouts, and known to everybody as such, made her friendly and made her bold. Supremacy has many agreeable accessories. The young man, who had taken off his hat and held it in his hand, half in respect, half in awkwardness, here blushed more deeply than she had done when she saw him first.

"I am not a stranger, Miss Margaret. I am Robert Glen, whom you used to play with when

you were a little girl; but I cannot expect you to remember me, for I have been long away."

"Oh, Rob!" she cried. Margaret was delighted. The vivid color came flushing back to her cheeks out of pure pleasure. She held out her hand to him. He had not been so respectful when they had parted, which was ten years ago. "Indeed, I mind you quite well, though I should not have known you after all this long time; but how did you know me?"

"The first moment I saw you," he said, "and there is nothing wonderful in that. There are many like me, but only one Miss Margaret, here or anywhere else."

The last words he murmured in an undertone, but Margaret made them out. She laughed, not in ridicule, but in pleasure, just touched with amusement. How funny to see him again, and that he should know her; and still more funny, though not disagreeable, that he should speak to her so.

"I was vexed," she said, "very vexed that a stranger should see me so, my shoe all dirty and my hand all torn—it looked so strange; but I am not vexed now, since it is only you, and not a stranger. Just look at me—such a figure! and what will Bell say?"

"You have still Bell?"

"Still Bell! who should we have but Bell?" cried Margaret, the idea of such a domestic change as the displacement of Bell never having so much as crossed her fancy. Then she added, quickly, "But tell me, for I have not heard of you for such a long, long time. You went to the college, Rob?"

She said his name unadvisedly in the first impulse; but looking up at him, and seeing him look at her in a way she was unused to, Margaret's countenance flamed once more with a momentary blush. She shrank a little. She said to herself that he was not a little boy now as he used to be, and that she would never call him Rob again.

"Yes, Miss Margaret, I went to the college. I went through all the curriculum, and took my degree sometime ago."

"Then are you a minister now?"

Margaret spoke with a little chill in her tone. She thought that to be a minister implied a withdrawal from life of a very melancholy and serious description, and that she might not be able to keep up easy relations with poor Rob if he had passed that Rubicon. She looked at him earnestly, with a great deal of gravity in her face. Margaret had not known many ministers close at hand, and never any so nearly on a level with her own youthful unimportance as Rob Glen.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "No. My poor mother! I will never give her the pleasure I ought. I am not a minister, and never will be. I say it with sorrow and shame."

"Oh!" cried Margaret, grooving so much interested that her breast heaved and her breath came quick. "Oh! and what was that for, Mr.—Rob? You have not done anything wrong?"

"No," he said, with a smile; "nothing wicked, and yet perhaps you will think it wicked. I cannot believe just what everybody else believes. There are papers and things to sign, doctrines—"

Margaret put her hands together timidly and looked into his face.

"You are not an infidel?" she said, with a look of awe and pain.

"No; I am—I don't quite know what. I don't examine too closely, Miss Margaret. I believe as much as I can, and I don't think anybody does more; but I can't sign papers, can I, when I do not know whether they are true or not? I cannot do it. I may be wrong, but I cannot say I believe what I don't believe."

"No," said Margaret, doubtfully. This was something entirely out of her way, and she did not know how to treat it. She made a hurried sweep over her own experiences. "I always think it is because I don't understand," she said; and then, after another pause, "When papa says things I don't understand, I just hold my tongue."

"But I am obliged to say yes or no, and I can't say yes. I hope you will not blame me, Miss Margaret; that would make me very unhappy. I have often thought you were one that would be sure to understand what my position was."

Margaret did not ask herself why it was that she was expected to understand; but she was vaguely flattered that he should think her approbation so important.

"Me! what do I know?" she said. "I have not been at the college, like you. I have never learned anything;" and, for almost the first time, it occurred to Margaret that there might be some reason in the animadversions and lamentations over her ignorance, of her sisters Grace and Jean.

"You know things without learning."

"Oh!—but you are making a fool of me, like papa," cried Margaret. "And what are you doing now, if you are not a minister? You have never been back again till now at the Farm?"

"I am doing just nothing, that is the worst of it. I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed."

"Beg!" She looked at him with a merry laugh. He was what Bell would have called "very well put on." Margaret saw, by instinct, though she was without any experience, that Rob Glen could not have been a gentleman; but yet he was well dressed, and very superior to everybody else about the Kirkton. "I suppose you have come home on a visit, and to rest."

"Yes; but, Miss Margaret, all this time your foot is wet and your hand is scratched. Will you come to the house? Shall I go and get you dry shoes from Bell? What can I do?"

"Oh, nothing," said Margaret; "do you think I never got my feet wet before? I will change them when I get in. But I think I will go home now. What have you been doing? Oh, drawing!" she exclaimed, with a cry of delight. She seized the book which he half showed, half withdrew. "Oh, I should like to see it—it is the Kirkton! Oh, I would like to draw like that! Oh," cried Margaret, with a deep-drawn breath, and all her heart in it, "what I would give!" and then she remembered that she had nothing to give, and stopped short, her lips half open, her eyes aflame.

"Will you let me show you how to do it? It would make me so happy. It is as easy as possible. You have only to try."

Margaret did not make any reply in her eagerness. She turned over the book with delight. The sketches were not badly done. There was the Kirkton, breezy and sunny, with its cold

tones of blue; there were all the glimpses of Earl's-hall that could be had at a distance; there was the estuary and the sand-banks, and the old pale city on the headland. But Margaret had never come across anything in the shape of an artist before, and this new capability burst upon her as something more enviable, more delightful than any occupation she had as yet ever known.

"I have a great many more," said the young man. "If you will come to the house, or here to the burn to-morrow, I will show you some that are better than these."

"Oh yes, I will come," said Margaret, without hesitation. "I would like to see them. I never saw anything so beautiful. The Kirkton its very self, and Earl's-hall, old Earl's-hall. Papa says it will tumble down about our ears; but it never can quite tumble down and come to an end while there's *that*!" the girl said. If the artist had been Turner himself he could not have had finer praise.

And she let him walk the length of the field with her, telling her about his wonderful art—then ran home, her heart beating, her mind roused, and amused, and delighted. The slow twilight was just beginning to draw a magical silvery veil over earth and sky. Margaret ran home hurried and breathless, occupied to the full, conscious of no more deficiencies.

"Have you been out all this time, Miss Margaret?" said Bell, just rising from her seat by the door, "and you've had your foot in the burn. Go quick and change, my bonnie pet. I've been ower lang in the court, and the dew's falling, and a' the starch out o' my cap. We're twa fuils for the bonny gloamin', me and you."

CHAPTER IV.

MARGARET went up-stairs with her heart and her feet equally light. She was full of excitement and pleasure. It was true that she had not many excitements in her life, especially of a pleasurable kind; but those she had encountered had not been straightway communicated to some one, as the happy privilege of her age in most cases. Out of sheer inability to contain her sentiments and sensations in one small bosom, she had indeed often poured forth innocent disclosures into the ear of Bell. And when these concerned anything that troubled her, specially the remarks and criticisms of her sisters, Bell had been the best of confidants, backing her up steadfastly, and increasing her indignation by the sympathy of warm and strong resentment. But of other troubles and pleasures, Bell had not been equally understanding. And she was the last person, Margaret felt, to whom she could tell the story of this evening's encounter. Bell would not have been amused and interested like Margaret. She would have opened great eyes of astonishment and exclaimed upon the audacity of Rob Glen in venturing to approach Miss Margaret. "Rob Glen! who was he to proffer his acquaintance to the young lady of Earl's-ha'?" Margaret knew as well how Bell would have said this, as if she had actually delivered the tirade. Therefore the girl made no mention of her new friend. She ran up-stairs,

where she found Jeanie lighting a pair of candles on the table in the East Chamber.

"I've lighted Sir Ludovic's lights, and will you want anything more the nicht, Miss Margaret?" said Jeanie, her fair fresh face giving out more light than did the candles.

"Oh, Jeanie!"—the girl began, but then she checked herself. No, she would not tell any one, why should she? Better to keep it in her own mind, and then there would be no harm. Margaret was not often scolded, but she had a misgiving that she might come in the way of that unusual discipline were she too communicative on the subject of her long conversation with Rob Glen.

She sat down in the East Chamber alone, her face and her eyes glowing. How pleasant it was to have an adventure! The little white-panelled room was but poorly lighted by the two candles. The window still full of twilight, clouds of gray here and there, with a lingering tinge upon them of the sun or its reflections, hung like a great picture on the wall. There were one or two actual pictures, but they were small, and dark, and old, not very decipherable at any time, and entirely invisible now. On the table, in the speck of light which formed the centre of the room, of itself a picture had there been any one to see, lay Lady Jean's old work, with its faded colors, in pretty harmony with all the scene around; and centre of the centre, Margaret's face, not faded, but so soft in its freshness, so delicate in girlish bloom. She sat with her elbows on the table, her face set in the palms of her hands, her eyes looking into the light, making the two little flames of the candles into stars reflected in their clearness. A half-formed smile played about the soft curve of her lips. How pleasant it was to have an adventure at all! And how agreeable the kind of the adventure! Rob Glen! yes, she remembered him quite well when she was seven years old. He had been twelve, a big boy, and very kind to little Miss Peggy.

The farm, which was a small farm, not equal to the large farms of wealthy Fife, a little bit of a place, which his mother had kept up when she became a widow, was close to Earl's-hall; and Margaret recollected how "fond" she had been of her playfellow in these old days, very fond of him! before he went into St. Andrews to school, and then away to his uncle in Glasgow (it all came back upon her) to college. She remembered even, now she came to think of it, the scoffs she had heard directed by Bell and John at the Glens in general, who had not thought St. Andrews good enough for their son, but had to send him to Glasgow, to set him up! And here he was again. Margaret remembered how he had carried her across the ditches and muddy places, and how she had kissed him when he went away; she blushed at the thought, and laughed a little. And now he had come back! and he could draw! That was the most interesting of all. He could make beautiful pictures of everything he saw.

The Kirkton, poor little place, had never looked so attractive before. It had been only a little village of no interest, which sisters Jean and Grace held in the utmost contempt, driving Margaret wild with suppressed rage by the comparison they made between the Scotch hamlet and their English villages; and now it was a pict-

ure! She wondered what they would think of it now. Margaret gazed into the flame of the candles and seemed to see it hanging upon a visionary background. A beautiful picture: the gray old church with its rustic tombs, and all the houses clustered below, where people were living, waiting their advance and preferment into the grassy graves above. Here was the real mission of art accomplished by the humblest artist—to make of the common and well-known a dazzling undiscovered glory. Only the Kirkton, yet a picture! and all the doing of the old friend equally glorified and changed—Rob Glen. Margaret was more pleasantly excited, more amused, more roused in mind and imagination than perhaps she had ever been in her life.

A stirring in the long room close by roused her to a sense of her duties. That windowful of sky had darkened; it was almost night: as much as it ever is night in Scotland in June—a silvery night, with no blackness in it but a vague whiteness, a soft celestial reflection of the departed day. Evidently it was late, time to go to bed. Margaret pushed the door open which led into the long room. Sir Ludovic was closing his book. He kept early hours; for it was his habit to wake very early in the morning, as is so usual to old people. He turned to her with a smile upon his face.

"My Peggy, you are late; what has kept you amused so long to-night? It is you generally who let me know when it is time for bed. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing, papa;" but Margaret blushed. However, as she blushed so often this was nothing to remark.

"Put it up upon the shelf," he said; "I have done with that one. It is heavy for you to lift, my dear. It is a sign that I am an old man, a very old man, my little Peggy, that I allow you to do everything for me; but at the same time there is a suitability in it. The young should learn to serve. When you are a full-blown lady, it is then that all the men you meet will serve you."

"I want no men to serve me, papa. When I am middle-aged, as you say, I will have no servants but women. Is not Jeanie better to hand you your plate and fill you your wine than old John?"

"Old John and I have grown old together, my Peggy; but I think your taste is very natural. A young woman is a pleasanter object than an old man."

"I did not mean that," she cried, with compunction; "you, papa, you are the handsomest of us all. There is no one to match you; but the like of Jeanie looks so clean and fresh, and John in his black clothes—"

"Looks like an old Cameronian minister, that is true; but, my Peggy, you must not judge by appearances. Before you are—middle-aged, as you say, you will learn that appearances are not to be trusted to. And, by-the-way, what is it to be middle-aged? For my instruction I would like to know."

Margaret paused to think. She stood looking at him with the big book in her hand, leaning it against the table, embracing it with one arm; then, naturally, as she moved, her eyes sought the uncovered window, and went afar into the silvery clouds to find her answer. As for her father, he sat with his ivory hands spread out on

the arms of his chair, looking at her with a smile. Her slimness and gracefulness and soft-breathing youth were a refreshment to him. It was like the dew falling, like the morning breaking to the old man; and, besides the sense of freshness and new life, it was a perpetual amusement to him to watch the workings of her unaccustomed mind, and the thoughts that welled up in the creature's face. He had perhaps never watched the growth of a young soul before, and he had never got over his first surprise and amusement at the idea that such a little being, only the other day a baby, only the other day running after a ball like a kitten, should think or have opinions at all.

"Middle-aged," said Margaret, with her pretty head upon one side, and great gravity in her face. "Perhaps, papa, you will not have the same idea as I have. Would it be twenty-five? That is not old, of course; but then it is not young either. If you were going to have any sense, I think you would have it by that age."

"Do you think so, my Peggy? That is but a little way to travel to get sense. Where is sense to be found, and can you tell me the place of understanding? It would be easily learned if it could be got at twenty-five."

"Oh, but twenty-five is a very good age, papa. Me—I am only seventeen."

"And you think you have a good deal of sense already, and have found out whereabouts wisdom dwells?" said Sir Ludovic; "then, to be sure, in eight years more you will have gone a long way toward perfection."

"Papa, you are making a fool of me again."

"No, my dear, only admiring and wondering. It is such a long time since I was twenty-five; and I am not half so sure about a great many things as I was then. Perhaps you are right, my little Peggy; one changes one's opinions often after—but it may be that just then you are at the crown of the brae. Far be it from me to pronounce a judgment. Dante puts it ten years later."

"But what Dante means," said Margaret, boldly—for, ignorant as she was, she had read translations of many things, even of the Divine Comedy, not having, perhaps, anything more amusing to read, which was the origin of most of the better knowledge she possessed—"what Dante means was the half of life, when it was half done."

"Ay, ay, that was it," said the old man, "half done! yet you see here I am, at seventy-five, still in everybody's way."

"Oh, papa," she said, fixing upon him reproachful eyes which two tears flooded, brimming the crystal vessels over—"oh, papa!"

"Well, my Peggy; I wonder if it is the better for you that your old father should live on? Well, my dear, it's better for some things. The old nest is gray, but it's warm. Though Jean and Grace, you know—Jean and Grace, and even Mrs. Ludovic, my dear, all of them think it's very bad for you. You would be better, they tell me, in a fine boarding-school in London."

"Papa!"

"Oh, I'm not going to send you away, my little Peggy, not till the old man's gone—a selfish old man. You must be a good girl, and prove me right to everybody concerned. Now, good-night, and run away to your bed; and you can tell John."

"Good-night, papa. I will be a good girl," she said, half laughing, with the tears in her eyes, as she had done when she was a child; and she made a little pause when she kissed him, and asked herself whether she should speak to him about Rob Glen, and ask if he would like to see the pictures? Surely to see such pictures would be a pleasure to anybody. But something kept Margaret silent. She could not tell what it was; and in the end she went away to tell John, without a word about her old acquaintance. Down-stairs she could hear Bell already fastening the shutters, and Jeanie passed her on the stair, fresh and smiling, though sleepy, with a "Gude-nicht, Miss Margret."

"Good-night, Jeanie; and you'll call me early?" she said; upon which Jeanie shook her head with a soft smile.

"If you were aye as ready to rise as me to cry upon you!"

"I will rise to-morrow," said Margaret. How good she was going to be to-morrow! Light as a bird she ran down to the old couple down-stairs. "John, papa is ready. You are to go to him this very minute. I stopped on the stair to speak to Jeanie, and papa will be waiting."

John answered with a grunt and groan. "And me, I'm to pay for it because little miss carries!"

Bell pushed him out of the kitchen with a laugh. "Gae away with you," she said. "Miss Margret, my man John would stand steady and be cut in sma' pieces with a pair o' scissiors sooner than that any harm should come to you. But his bark is aye waur than his bite. And what have you been doing all this night, my bonnie bird? I've neither seen your face nor heard your fit upon the stair."

"Oh, I was thinking," said Margaret, after a pause; "thinking—"

"Lord bless us and save us, when the like of you begin thinking! And what were you thinking upon, my bonnie dear?"

"Nothing," said Margaret, musing. She had fallen back into the strain of her usual fanciful thoughts.

"Naething? That's just the maist dangerous subject you can think upon," said Bell, shaking her head; "that's just what I dinna like. Think upon whatever you please, but never upon naething, Miss Margret. Will I come with you and see you to your bed? It's lang since I've put a brush upon your bonnie hair."

"Oh, my hair is quite right, Bell. I brush it myself every night."

"And think about naething all the time. Na, Miss Margret, you maunna do that. I've gathered the fire, and shut the shutters, and put a thing ready for Sir Ludovic's tea in the morning. Is there onything mair? No, not a thing, not a thing. Now come, my lamb, and I'll put you to your bed."

Margaret made no objection. She could follow her own fancies just as easily while Bell was talking as when all was silent round her. They went together up the winding stair, Bell toiling along with a candle in her hand, which flickered picturesquely, now here, now there, upon the spiral steps. Margaret's room was on the upper story, and to reach it you had to traverse another long hall, running the whole length of the building, like the long room below. This room was scarcely furnished at all. It had some

old tapestry hanging on the walls, an old harpsichord in a corner, and bits of invalided furniture which were beyond use.

"Eh, the bonnie dances and the grand ladies I've seen in this room!" Bell said, shaking her head, as she paused for breath. The light of the one little candle scarcely showed the long line of the wall, but displayed a quivering of the wind in the tapestry, as if the figures on it had been set in motion. "Lord bless us!" said Bell. "Oh, ay, I ken very well it's naething but the wind; but I've never got the better o' my first fright. The first time I was in this grand banquetting-hall—and oh, but it was a grand hall then! never onything so grand had the like of me a chance to see. I thought the Queen's Grace herself could not possess a mair beautiful place."

"If it was any use," said Margaret, with a sigh.

"Oh, whisht, my bonnie bird. It's use to show what great folk the Leslies were wance upon a time, and that's what makes us a' proud. There's none in the county that should go out o' the room or into the room afore you, Miss Margret. You've the alddest blood."

"But what good does that do if I am the youngest girl?" said Margaret, half piqued, half laughing.

She was proud of her race, but the empty halls were chill. She did not wait for any more remarks on Bell's part, but led the way into her room, which opened off this banquetting-hall, a turret room of a kind of octagon shape, panelled like all the rest. It looked out through its deepest window on entirely a different scene, on the moonlight rising pale on the eastern side, and the whitening of the sea, the *tremolar della marina*, was in the distance, the silvery glimmer and movement of the great broad line of unpeopled water.

The girl stood and looked out while the old woman lighted the candles on the table. How wide the world was, all full of infinite sky and sea, not to speak of the steady ground under foot, which was so much less great. Margaret looked out, her eyes straying far off to the horizon, the limit beyond which there was more and more water, more and more widening firmament. She was very reluctant to have it shut out. To draw down a blind, and retire within the little round of those walls, what a shrinking and lessening of everything ensued! "But it's more sheltered like; it's no so cold and so far," said Bell, with a little shiver. She was not so fond of the horizon. The thick walls that kept out the cold, the blind that shut out that blue opening into infinity, were prospect enough for Bell. She made her young lady sit down, and undid the loops of her silken hair. This hair was Bell's pride; so fine, so soft, so delicate in texture, not like the gold wire, all knotted and curly, on Jeanie's good-looking head, who was the other representative of youth in the house. "Eh, it is a pleasure to get my hands among it," said Bell, letting the long soft tresses ripple over her old fingers. How proud she was of its length and thickness! She stood and brushed and talked over Margaret's head, telling her a hundred stories, which the girl, half hearing, half replying, yet wholly absorbed in her own fancies, had yet a certain vague pleasure in as they floated over her.

It was good to have Bell there, to feel the touch of homely love about her, and the sound of the voice which was as familiar as her own soft breath. Bell was pleased too. She was not offended when she perceived that her nursing answered somewhat at random. "What is she but a bairn? and bairns' ways are wonderful when their bit noddles begin working," Bell said, with the heavenly tolerance of wise affection. She went out of the room afterward, with her Scotch delicacy, to give Margaret time to say her prayers, then came back and covered her carefully with her hard-working hand, softened miraculously by love. "And the Lord bless my white doo," the old woman said. There were no kisses or caresses exchanged, which was not the habit of the reserved Scotchwoman; but her hand lingered on the coverlet, "happing" her darling. Summer nights are sweet in Fife, but not overwarm. And thus ended the long midsummer day.

CHAPTER V.

ROBERT GLEN, whose reappearance had so interested and excited the innocent mind of Margaret Leslie, was no other than the farmer's son, in point of locality her nearest neighbor, but in every other respect, childhood being fairly over, as far removed from her as if she had been a princess, instead of the child of an impoverished country gentleman. In childhood it had not been so. Little Margaret had played with Rob in the hay-fields, and sat by him while he fished in the burn, and had rides upon the horses he was leading to the water, many a day in that innocent period. She had been as familiar about the farm "as if it had belonged to her," Mrs. Glen had said, and had shared the noonday "piece" of her little cavalier often enough, as well as his sports. Even Bell had found nothing to say against this intimacy.

The Glens were very decent folks, not on a level with the great farmers of Fife, yet well to do and well doing; and Rob's devoted care of the little lady had saved Bell, as she herself expressed it, "many a trail;" but in the ten years from seven to seventeen many changes occur. Rob, who was the youngest, had been the clever boy of the family at the farm. His mother, proud of his early achievements, had sent him to St. Andrews to the excellent schools there, with vague notions of advancement to come. That he should be a minister was, of course, her chief desire, and the highest hope of her ambition; but at this early period there was no absolute necessity for a decision. He might be a writer if he proved to have no "call" for the ministry; or he might be a doctor if his mind took that turn. However, when he had reached the age at which in Scotland the college supplants the school (too early, as everybody knows), Rob was quite of opinion that he had a call to be a minister; and he would have gone on naturally to his college career at St. Andrews, but for the arrival of an uncle, himself sonless, from Glasgow, whose family pride was much excited by Rob's prizes and honors. This was his mother's brother, like herself come of the most respectable folk, "a decent, honest man," which means everything in Scottish moral phraseology. He was

"a merchant" in Glasgow, meaning a shopkeeper, and had a good business and money in the bank, and only one little daughter—a fact which opened his heart to the handsome, bright boy who was likely to bring so much credit to his family. Whether Robert Hill (for the boy was his namesake) would have thought so highly of his nephew without these prizes is another question; but as it was, he took an immediate and most warm interest in him. Mr. Hill, however, felt the usual contempt of a member of a large trading community for every small and untrading place.

"St. An'rews!" he said; "send the boy to St. An'rews to sleep away his time in an auld hole where there's naething doing! Na, na, I'll no hear o' that. Send him to me, and I'll look after him. We know what we're about in Glass-kie; nane o' your dreamin' and dozin' there. We ken the value o' time and the value o' brains, and how to make use o' them. There's a room that's never used at the tap o' the house, and I'll see till 'im," said the generous trader.

Mrs. Glen, though half offended at this depreciation of native learning, was pleased and proud of her brother's liberality.

"I'll no hear a word against St. An'rews," she said. "Mony a clever man's come out of it; but still I'm no blind to the advantages on the other side. The lad's at an age when it's a grand thing to have a man over him. No but what he's biddable: but laddies will be laddies, and a man in the house is aye an advantage. So if you're in earnest, Robert (and I'm much obliged to ye for your guid opinion of him), I'm no saying but what I'll take ye at your word."

"You may be sure I mean it, or I wadna say it," said her brother; and so the bargain was made.

Rob went to Glasgow, half eager, half reluctant, as is the manner of boys, and in due time went through his classes, and was entered at the Divinity Hall. A Scotch student of his condition has seldom luxurious or over-dainty life in his long vacations—six months long; and calculated for this purpose, that the student may be self-supporting, Rob did many things which kept him independent. He helped his uncle in the shop at first with the placidity of use and wont, thinking a good shop a fine thing, as who can doubt it is? But when Rob began to get on in his learning, and was able to take a tutorship, he discovered with a pang that a shop was not so fine a thing as he supposed.

Early, very early, the pangs of intellectual superiority came upon him. He was clever, and loved reading, and thus got himself, as it were, into society before he was aware of the process that was going on within him, making friends of very different social position from his own. Then the professors noticed him, found him what is easily called "cultivated"—for he had read much in his little room over the shop, with constantly growing ambition to escape from his lowly place and find a higher—and one of them recommended him to a lady in the country as tutor to her boys. This was a most anxious elevation at first, but it trained him to the habits of a class superior to his own; and after that the shop and its homely ways were anguish to Rob. Very soon he found out that it was inconvenient to go so far to college; then he found occupations in

the evening, even during the college session, and thus felt justified in separating himself from his kind uncle, who accepted his excuses, though not without a shade of doubt. "Well, laddie, well, laddie, we're no the folk to keep you if you can do better for yourself," the good shopkeeper said, affronted yet placable. The process is not uncommon; and, indeed, the young man meant no great harm. He meant that his younger life was pushing out of the husk in which it had been confined, that he was no longer altogether the same as the people to whom he belonged. It was true enough, and if it was hard, who could help that? It gave him more pain to take his plentiful meal rudely in the room behind the shop than it could give them to take it without him.

So he reasoned, and was right and wrong, as we all are, in every revolutionary crisis. Had he been bred a shopkeeper or a farmer lad, no such thoughts would have distracted his mind, and probably he would have been happier; but then he had not been brought up either to the shop or to the farm, and how could he help the natural development which his circumstances and training brought with them? So by degrees he dropped the shop. There was no quarrel, and he went to see them sometimes on the wintry Sunday afternoons, and restrained all his feelings of dismay and humiliation, and bore their "ways" as best he could; but there is nobody so quick as a vulgar relation to find out when a rising young man begins to be ashamed of him. The Hills were sore and angry with the young man to whom they had been so kind. But the next incident in Rob's career was one that called all his relations round him, out of sheer curiosity and astonishment, to see a prodigy unprecedented in their lives.

After he had gone through all the Latin and Greek that Glasgow could furnish, and he had time for, and had roamed through all the philosophies and begun Hebrew, and passed two years at the Divinity Hall, this crisis came. Six months more and Rob would have been ready to begin his trials before the Presbytery for license as a probationer, when he suddenly petrified all his friends, and drove his mother half out of her senses, by the bewildering announcement that his conscience made it impossible for him to enter the Scotch Church. The shock was one which roused the entire family into life. Cousins unheard of before aroused themselves to behold this extraordinary spectacle. Such hesitations are not so common with the budding Scotch minister as with the predestined English parson, and they are so rare in Rob's class, that this announcement on his part seemed to his relations to upset the very balance of heaven and earth. Made up his mind not to be a minister! The first sensation in their minds was one of absolute incredulity, followed by angry astonishment when the "infatuated" young fellow repeated and stood by his determination. Not to be a minister! What would he be, then? what would satisfy him? Set him up! they all cried. It was like a fresh assertion of superiority, a swagger and flourish over the mall, unbounded presumption and arrogance. Doubts! he was a bonnie one to have doubts. As if many a better man had not signed the Confession before him, ay, and been glad to have the Confession to sign!

This at first was the only view which the kindred felt capable of taking. But by-and-by, when it became apparent that this general flutter of horror was to have no effect, and that Rob stood by his resolution, other features in his enormity began to strike the family. All the money spent upon him at the college, all the time he had lost; what trade could he go into now with any chance of getting on? Two-and-twenty, and all his time gone for nothing! His uncle, Robert Hill, who had been as indignant as any, here interposed. He sent for his sister, and begged her to compose herself. The lad's head was turned, he said. He had made friends that were not good for a lad in his class of life, that had led him away in other ways, and had made him neglectful of his real friends. But still the lad was a fine lad, and not beyond the reach of hope. This placable sentiment was thought by everybody to proceed from Uncle Robert's only daughter, Anne, who was supposed to regard her cousin with favorable eyes; but anyhow the suggestion of the Hills was that "the minister," their own minister, should be got to "speak to" Rob. Glad was the mother of this or any other suggestion, and the minister undertook the office with good-will.

"Perhaps I may be able to remove some of your difficulties," he said, and he called to himself a professor, one of those who had the young man's training in hand. Thus Rob became a hero once more among all belonging to him. Had the minister spoken? What had the minister said? Had he come to his right mind? the good people asked. And, indeed, the minister did speak, and so did the professor, both of whom thought Rob's a most interesting case. They were most anxious to remove his difficulties; nay, for that matter, to remove everything—doctrines and all—to free the young man from his scruples. They spoke, but they spoke with bated breath, scarcely able to express the full amount of the "respect and sympathy" with which they regarded these difficulties of his. "We too—" they said, in mysterious broken sentences, with imperfect utterance of things too profound for the common ear. And they did their best to show him how he might gulp down a great many things without hurting his conscience, which the robust digestion of the past had been able to assimilate, but which were not adapted for the modern mind. "There is more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds," these gentlemen said. But Rob held out. He would have been foolish, indeed, as well as rarely disinterested and unsusceptible to the most delicate of flatteries, had he not held out. He had never been of so much importance in the course of his life.

It may be doubtful, however, if it was his conscience alone which stopped him short in his career. Rob had learned in his tutorships, and among the acquaintances acquired at college, to know that a Scotch minister did not possess so elevated a position as in rural Fife he was thought to do. The young man had a large share of ambition in him, and he had read of society and of the great world, that abstraction which captivates inexperienced youth. A minister could no more reach this than, indeed, could the country laird who was the highest representative of greatness known to Rob; but literature could

(he thought), art could : and he could write (he flattered himself), and he could draw. Why, then, should he bind himself to the restraints necessary for that profession, when other means of success more easy and glorious were in his power?

This was a very strong supplementary argument to strengthen the resistance of his conscience. And he did not give in ; he preferred to go home with his mother, to take, as all his advisers entreated him, time to think everything over. Rob had no objections to take a little time. He wanted money to take him to London, to start him in life, even to pay off the debts which he said nothing of, but which weighed quite as heavily upon him as his troubles of conscience. This was how he came to be, after such a long interval, once more living with his mother at Earl's-hall farm. He had come home in all the importance of a sceptical hero, a position very dazzling to the simple mind, and very attractive to many honest people. But it was not so pleasant at home. Instead of being the centre of anxious solicitude, instead of being plied by conciliatory arguments, coaxed and persuaded, and respected and sympathized with, he found himself the object of his mother's irony, and treated with a contemptuous impatience which he fain would have called bigotry and intolerance.

Mrs. Glen was not at all respectful of honest doubt, and she had a thorough contempt for anything and everything that kept a man from making his way in the world. She was not indeed a person of refinement at all. She had lived a hard life, struggling to bring up her children and to "push them forrit," as she said. The expression was homely, and the end to be obtained perhaps not very elevated. To "push forrit" your son to be Lord Chancellor, or even a general officer, or a bishop, is a fine thing, which strikes the spectator ; but when all you can do is to push him "forrit" to a shop in Dundee, is the struggle less noble ? It is less imposing, at all events. And the struggling mother who had done her best to procure such rise in life and in comfort as was within her reach for her children was not a person of noble mind or generous understanding. When Rob came home, upon whom her highest hopes had been set, not prosperous like the others, but a failure and disappointment, doing nothing, earning nothing, and with no prospect before him of either occupation or gain, her mortification made her bitter. Fury and disappointment filled her heart. She kept silent for the first day, only going about her household affairs with angry energy, scolding her servants, and as they said, "dinging everything about." "So lang as she disna ding me!" said Jean the dairy-maid ; but it was not to be expected that any long time should pass before she began to "ding" some one, and ere long the culprit himself began to feel the force of her trouble.

"What are you doing?" she cried ; "do you call that doing anything—drawing a crookit line with a pencil and filling it up with paint? Paint! ye might paint the auld cart if that's the trade you mean to follow. It would aye be worth a shilling or twa, which is mair than ever thae scarts and splashes will be." Or when Rob escaped into the seclusion of a book : "Read, oh ay, ye can read fast enough when it's for naething but diversion and to pass the time ; but ye'll

ne'er gather bawbees with your reading, nor be a credit to them that belong to you." This was the sting of the whole. He was no credit to those who belonged to him, rather he was an implied shame ; for who would believe, Mrs. Glen asked, that this sudden return was by his own will? "Na, na," she said, "they'll think it is for ill-doing, and that he's turned away out of the college. It's what I would do myself. And to think of all I've done, and all I've put up with, and a' to come to naething! Eh, man! I would soon, soon have put an end to your doubts. I would have made ye sure of ae thing, if it hadna been your uncle Robert, and his ministers, ye should hae had nae doubts about that : that no idle lad should sit at my fireside and devour the best o' everything. If ye had the heart of a mouse ye couldna do it. Me, I would starve first ; me, I would sweep the streets. I would go down a coal-pit, or work in a gawley chain afore I would sorn on my ain mother, a widow-woman, and eat her out o' house and hame!"

Poor Rob! he was not very sensitive, and he had been used to his mother's ways and moods, or these reproaches would have been hard upon him. No doubt, had he been the innocent sufferer for conscience' sake which he half believed himself to be, life would have been unendurable in these circumstances ; but as it was, he only shrugged his shoulders, or jibed in return and paid her back in her own coin. They were both made of the same rough material, and were able to give and take, playing with the blows which would have killed others. Rob was not driven out of the house, out upon the world in despair, as a more sensitive person might have been. He stayed doggedly, not minding what was said, till he should succeed in extracting the money which would be necessary for his start ; and from this steady purpose a few warm words were not likely to dissuade him. He, on his side, felt that he was too much of a man for that. But it is not pleasant to have your faults dinned into your ears, however much you may scorn the infliction, and Rob had gone out on the day he met Margaret very much cast down and discouraged. He had almost made up his mind to confront fate rather than his mother. Almost—but he was not a rash young man, notwithstanding all that had happened to him, and the discomfort of issuing forth upon the world penniless was greater than putting up (he said to himself) with an old wife's flying ; but still the flying was not pleasant to bear.

"Wha's that?" his mother said when he returned. "Oh, it's you! bless me, I thought it was some person with something to do. There was not the draigh in the foot that I'm getting used to. Maybe something's happened! You've gotten something to do, or you've ta'en another thought! and well I wot it's time."

"No," he said, "nothing's happened. I'm tired enough and ready enough to take anything that offered, mother ; but, worse luck, nothing has happened. I don't know what could happen here."

"No, nor me neither," said Mrs. Glen ; "when a lad hangs on at hame looking for luck like you, and never doing a hand's turn, it's far from likely luck will ever come the side he's on. Oh, pit away your trash, and dinna trouble me with the sight o't! Painting! paint the auld cart, as

I tell ye, if you're that foud o' painting, or the byre door."

"Everybody is not of your mind," said Rob, stung by this assault. "There are some that think them worth looking at, and that not far off either: somebody better worth pleasing than—" you, he had almost said; but with better taste he added, "any one here."

"And wha may it be that has such guid taste?" said the mother, satirically; "a lass, I'll wager. Some poor silly thing or other that thinks Rob Glen's a gentleman, and is proud of a word from ane sae well put on. Eh, but it's easy to be well put on when it comes out of another person's pocket. It would be some lass out of the Kirkton. How dare ye stand there no saying a word, but smile-smiling at me?"

"Would you like it better if I cried?" he said; "smiling is not so easy always. I have little enough to smile at; but it is good sometimes to feel that all the world is not against me."

"And wha is't that's on your side? Some fool of a lass," repeated Mrs. Glen, contemptuously. "They're silly enough for anything when a young lad's in the case. Who was it?" she added, raising her voice; "eh, I would just like to gie her my opinion. It's muckle the like of them know."

"I doubt if your opinion would matter much," he said, with an air of superiority that drove her frantic. "I respect it deeply, of course; but she—a young lady, mother—may be allowed, perhaps, to think herself the best judge."

"Leddy!" said Mrs. Glen, surprised; and instinctively she searched around her to find out who this could be. "You'll be meaning Mary Fleming, the dress-maker lass; some call her Miss; or maybe the bit governess at Sir Claud's."

Rob laughed; in the midst of his troubles this one gleam of triumph was sweet. "I mean no stranger," he said, "but an old friend—one that was once my companion and playfellow; and now she's grown up into the prettiest fairy, and does not despise me even now."

Mrs. Glen was completely nonplussed. She looked at him with an air of imperious demand, which, gradually yielding to the force of her curiosity, fell, as he made no reply, into a quite softened interrogation. "An auld companion?" she said to herself, bewildered; then added, in a gentler tone than she had used since his return, a side remark to herself: "He's no that auld himsel'."

"No," he said, "but she is younger, mother, and as beautiful as an angel, I think; and she had not forgotten Rob Glen."

His mother looked at him more and more perplexed. But with her curiosity and with her perplexity her heart melted. Lives there a mother so hard, even when her anger is hottest, as to be indifferent to any one who cares for her boy? "I canna think who you're meaning," she said; "auld companions are scarce even to the like o' me—I mind upon nobody that you could name by that name, a callant like you. Auld playfellow! there's the minister's son, as great a credit to his family as you're a trial; but he's no a ledgy—"

Again Rob laughed; he was indemnified for all his sufferings. "I will not keep you in

doubt," he said, with a certain condescension.

"It is little Margaret Leslie; you cannot have forgotten her, mother. If she is not a lady I don't know who is, and," he added, sinking his voice with genuine feeling, and a tender rush of childish recollection, "my little queen."

"Little Margaret Leslie!" said his mother, looking at him stupefied, "you're no meaning Miss Margret at Earl's-hall?" she cried, with a half shriek of astonishment, and gazed at him open-mouthed, like one in a dream.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. GLEN was much more gentle with her son after this triumph of his. Margaret Leslie was but a girl, and her approbation did not mean very much; but it was astonishing how the farmer-woman calmed down, and what a different aspect things began to take to her, after she heard of this meeting. She said nothing more that night; but stared at her son, and let him go, with a half-reluctant relinquishment of her prey, for the moment. And many were the thoughts which crowded through her mind during the night. She had a respect for talent, like all her nation; but she did not admire the talent which was impractical, and which did not serve a purpose. A young man who was clever enough to pass all his examinations with credit, to preach a good sermon, to get a living, that was what she could understand, and she had been proud by anticipation in her son's ability to do all this; but when it turned out that he did not mean to employ his talent so, and when his cleverness dwindled down into something impalpable, something that could neither be bought and sold, nor weighed and measured, something which only made a difference between him and other men, without being of any use to him or placing him in the way of any advantage—instead of respecting it, Mrs. Glen scorned the miserable distinction. "Clever! ay, and much good it did him. Tawlent! he would be better without it."

Such unprofitable gifts exasperated her much more than stupidity would have done. But when she heard of the interview with Margaret Leslie, and the renewal of friendship, and the girl's delight with those "scarts," of which she herself was so contemptuous, her practical mind stopped short to consider. Perhaps, after all, though they would never make a living for him, nor were of any earthly use that she could see, these talents might be so directed by a wise and guiding hand as yet to produce something, perhaps to bring him to fortune. A girl who was an heiress might be almost as good a thing for Rob as a kirk. To do Mrs. Glen justice, she did not put the heiress on a level with the kirk, or sceptically allow the one to be as good as the other. She only seized upon the idea as a *pis aller*, reflecting that, if the kirk was not to be had, a lass with a tocher might make some amends.

Here, then, was something to be done, something practical, with meaning and "an object" in it. Mrs. Glen dearly loved to have an object. It made all the difference to her. It was like going somewhere on business instead of merely

taking a walk. The latter mode of exercise she could not abide; but put "an object" into it, and it changed the whole aspect of affairs. This was how her son Rob's hitherto useless accomplishments rose in her estimation now, when they began to appear no longer useless, but possibly capable of fulfilling some certain kind of end, if not a very exalted one. At once they acquired interest in her eyes. He himself and his presence at home ceased to be aimless, useless, almost disgraceful, as she had hitherto felt them to be. When she got up next morning, it was with a sense of comfort and encouragement greater than she had felt since the unhappy moment when he had declared to her that it was not possible for him to be a minister. Even now, she could not look back without exasperation on that sudden change and downfall of her pride and comfort. But here at least was a prospect for him, a something before him, a way in which his talents, unprofitable as they seemed, might yet be made of practical use. The change in her manner was instantly apparent to her household. "The mistress has gotten word of something," Jean, the dairy-maid, said, whose hope had been that she herself might not be "dinged" like everything else in the mistress's way. She did not "ding" anything on that blissful morning. She was even tolerant, though it cost her a struggle, when Rob was late for breakfast. Her whole being seemed softened and ameliorated, the world had opened out before her. Here was an object for exertion, an aim to which she could look forward; and with this life could never be quite without zest to the energetic disposition of Mrs. Glen.

The first sign of the improved condition of affairs that struck Rob occurred after breakfast, when his mother, instead of flinging a jibe at his uselessness, as she went off, bustling and hot-tempered, to her own occupations, addressed him mildly enough, yet with a hasty tone that sounded half shame and half offence. It was not to be expected, was it, that she should now encourage him in the habits she had despised and abused yesterday without some sense of embarrassment and a certain shamefacedness? A weaker woman would not have done it at all, but would have thought of her consistency, and kept silent at least. But Mrs. Glen was far too consistent to have any fears for her consistency. Her embarrassment only made her tone hasty, and made her postpone her speech till she had reached the door. When she had opened it, and was about to leave the room, she turned round to her son, though without looking at him. She said,

"If you will draw, if you ca' that drawing, there's a very bonnie view of the Kirkton from the west green. I'm no saying you're to waste your time on such nonsense, but if you will do't, there's the bonniest view."

With this she disappeared, leaving Rob in a state of wonder which almost reached the point of consternation. It made him superstitious. His mother—his mother! to pause and recommend to him the bonniest view! Something must be going to happen. Never in his life had he been so surprised. He got up, half stupefied, as if under a mystic compulsion, and got his sketching-block and his colors, and went out to the west green. It was as if some voice had

come out of the sky above him, or from the soil beneath his feet, commanding this work. What was he that he should be disobedient to the heavenly vision? He went out like a man in a dream, his feet turning mechanically to the indicated spot.

It was a fresh yet sunny morning, the dew not yet off the grass, for everything was early at the farm. The hills, far off, lay clear in softest tints of blue, dark yet transparent, the very color of aerial distance, while all the hues of the landscape between, the brown ploughed land, the green corn, the faint yellowing of here and there a prosperous field, the darkness of the trees and hedges, the pale gleams of water, rose into fuller tones of color as they neared him, yet all so heavenly clear. The morning was so clear that Jean, in the byre, shook her head, and said there would be rain. The clearness of the atmosphere brought everything near; you might have stretched out your hands and touched the Sidlaws, and even the blue peaks of the Grampians beyond; and in the centre of the landscape lay the Kirkton, glorified, every red roof in it, every bit of gray-yellow thatch and dark brown wall telling against the background of fields; the trees scarcely ruffled by the light morning wind, the church rising like a citadel upon its mound of green, flecked with the burial-places of the past, the houses clustered round it, the smoke rising, a faint darkening, as of breath in the air, to mark where human living was. What a scene! yet nothing; the homeliest country, low hills, broad fields, a commonplace village. For a moment Rob, though he had no genius, fell into a trance, as of genius, before this wonderful, simple landscape. "A voice said unto me, Write; and I said, What shall I write?" How put it into words, into colors upon dull paper? His head was filled with a magical confusion. For once in his life he approached the brink of genius—in the sense of his incapacity. He sat down, gazed, and could do no more.

By-and-by Mrs. Glen came strolling out from the house, with that assumed air of ease and leisure which is always so comically transparent. She meant to assume that she had nothing to do, and was taking a walk for pleasure, which was about as unlikely a thing as could have happened, almost as unlikely as pure interest in Rob's work, which was her real motive. She wanted to see what he had done, whether he had taken that bonniest view, how he was getting on with it, and if it was a thing which could, by any possibility, dazzle and delight a young lady who was an heiress. Assuredly she had not sent out her son to dream over the landscape, to do anything but draw it there and then without delay, as if he had been sent to plough a field. She came up to him, elaborately unoccupied and at her ease, yet explanatory.

"I've just come out to look about me," she said, with fictitious jauntiness. "So you're at it again! Eh, laddie, what a waste o' time and good paper, no to speak of thae colors that cost money! And how far are you on by this time? are you near done?"

Rob had the presence of mind to shut his book hastily.

"I have just begun, mother; but I did not think you took any interest in my poor drawing."

"Me—take an interest? No! But if you're to waste my substance and your ain time taking pictures, I may as well see what there is to see as other folk."

"You shall see it when it is done," said Rob. "It is not in a condition to show now. It is not a thing that can be done in a minute. There is a great deal of thought necessary—the different harmonies of color, the relation of one part to another—"

Mrs. Glen was overawed.

"Ane would think it was some grand affair. A bit scar't upon the paper, and a wheen greens and blues: and ye talk as if it was a battle to fight or a grand law-plea."

"My dear mother," said Rob, "many a man could fight a battle that could not draw the Kirkton, with all the hills behind it, and the clouds, and the air."

"Air! ye can paint air, ye clever lad!" cried Mrs. Glen, with a laugh. "Maybe you can paint the coos moving and the sheeps baaing? I would not wonder. It's as easy as the air, which every bairn kens is no a thing you can see."

"I don't say I can do it myself," said Rob; "but I've seen pictures where you would think you heard the cows and the sheep—yes, and the skylarks up in the sky, and the hare plashing about in the wet woods."

"Just that," said his mother, "and the country gomerel that believes all you like to tell her. Among a' thae bonnie things there should be a place for the one that's to be imposed upon; but you'll no put me there, I'll warrant you," she cried, flouncing away in sudden wrath.

This interruption roused Rob and put him upon his mettle. If it was well to have thus dignified his work in her eyes so that she should be concerned in its progress, the result was not an unmitigated good. Hitherto he had worked as the spirit moved him, and when he was not sufficiently stirred had let his pencil alone. But this would not do, now that his labor had become a recognized industry. He betook himself to his task with a sigh.

Rob's artist-powers were not great. He drew like an amateur, not even an amateur of a high order, and would not have impressed any spectator who had much knowledge of art. But he had a certain amount of that indescribable quality which artists call "feeling," a quality which sometimes makes the most imperfect of sketches more attractive than the skilfullest piece of painting. This is a gift which is more dependent upon moods and passing impulses than upon knowledge and skill; and no doubt the subtlety of those flying shadows, the breadth of the infinite morning light, so pure, so delicate, yet brilliant, put them beyond the hand of the untrained craftsman. The consequence of this morning's work, the first undertaken with legitimate sanction and authority, was accordingly a failure. Rob put the Kirkton upon his paper very faithfully; he drew the church and the houses so that nobody could fail to recognize them; but as for the air of which he had boasted! alas, there was no air in it. He worked till the hour of the farm dinner; worked on, getting more eager over it as he felt every line to fail, and walked home, flushed and excited, when he heard his name called through the mid-day brightness. The

broth was on the table when he went in, putting down his materials on a side-table; and Mrs. Glen was impatient of the moment he spent in washing his hands.

"You have as many fykes as a fine leddy," she said. It had not occurred to her to make this preparation for her meal. She drew her chair to the table, and said grace in the same breath with this reproach. "Bless these mercies," she said; and then, "Ye canna say but you've had a lang morning, and naebody to disturb you. I hope you have something to show for it now."

"Not much," said Rob.

"No much! It's a pretence, then, like a' the rest! Lord bless me, I couldna spend the whole blessed day without doing a hand's turn, no, if you would pay me for it. Eh, but we're deceived creatures," cried Mrs. Glen; "as glad when a bairn comes into the world as if it brought a fortune with it! A bonnie fortune! anxiety and care; and if there's a moment's pleasure, it's aye ransomed by days of trouble. Sup your broth; they're very good broth, far better than the like of you deserve; but maybe you think it's no a grand enough dinner for such a fine gentleman? Na, when I was just making up my mind to let you take your will and see what you could do your ain way—and you set up your face and tell me, no much! No much! if it's not enough to anger a saint!"

"There it is; you can judge for yourself," cried Rob, with sudden exasperation. He jumped up from the table so quickly that his mother had no time to point out his want of manners in getting up in the midst of his dinner. The words were stopped on her lips, when he suddenly placed the block on which he had been drawing before her. Mrs. Glen had not condescended to look at any of these performances before. It would have seemed a sort of acceptance of his excuse had she taken any notice of the "rubbish" with which he "played himself," and she had really felt the contempt she expressed. Drawing pictures! it was a kind of childish occupation, an amusement to be pursued on a wet day, when nothing else was possible, or as a solace in the tedium of illness. But when Rob put down before her, relieved against the white table-cloth, the Kirkton itself in little, a very reproduction of the familiar scene she had beheld every day for years, the words were stopped upon his mother's lips.

"Eh!" she cried, in mere excess of emotion, able for nothing but a monosyllable. The very imperfection of it gave it weight in Mrs. Glen's unpractised eyes. "Losh me!" she cried, when she had recovered the first shock of admiration. "Rob, was it you that did that? are you sure it's your ain doing?" She could not trust her own eyes.

"And poor enough too," said Rob, but he liked the implied applause: who would not? Praise of what we have done well may satisfy our intellectual faculties, but praise of a failure, that is a thing which really goes to the heart.

"Poor! I would like to ken what you mean by poor?" Mrs. Glen pushed away the broth and took up the block in a rapture of surprise and delight. "It's the very Kirkton itself!" she said; "there's Robert Jamieson's house, and there's Hugh Macfarlane's, and there's the way

you go to the post, and there's the Kilnelly burying-ground, and the little road up to the kirk—no a thing missed out. And do you mean to tell me it's a' your own doing? Oh, laddie, laddie, the talents you've gotten frae Providence! and the little use you make o' them," added his mother, with a sudden recollection of the burden of her prophecy against her son, which could not be departed from even now.

Rob was so much encouraged that he ventured to laugh. "There is nothing I wish so much as to make more use of them," he said; "I ought to study and have good teaching."

"Teaching! what do you want with teaching? You were never one that was easy satisfied; what mair would you have?" she cried. She could not take her eyes from the drawing. She touched it lightly with her finger to make sure that it was flat, and did not owe its perspective to mechanical causes. "To think it's naething but a cedar pencil and a wheen paints! I never saw the like! and you to do it, a laddie like you! It beats me! Ay, there's Robert Jamieson's house, and yon's Hugh Macfarlane's, and the wee gate into the kirk-yard as natural! and Widow Morrison's small shop joining the kirk. I can 'most see the things in the window. I would like the Minister to see it," said Mrs. Glen.

"Not that one, it is not good enough; there are others, mother."

She cast upon him a half-contemptuous glance. He was "no judge," even though it was he who had done it: how could he be a judge, when he had so little appreciation of this great work?

"It's a great deal you ken," she said; "I will take it mysel' and let him see it. He would be awfu' pleased. His ain kirk, and ye can just see the Manse trees, though it's no in the picture. And a' done in one forenoon! I suppose," she added, suddenly, "the like of this brings in silver. It's a business, like any other trade?"

"When they are better than that, yes—pictures sell; but you should not speak of it as a trade."

"I wish it was half as honest and straightforward as many a trade. Better than that! that's aye your way. But you have not suppit your broth. I would not say now," said Mrs. Glen, in high good-humor "(sit down and finish your dinner), but Miss Margret would like a look at that."

"It is not half good enough."

"Hold your peace, you silly lad! I hope I ken what I'm saying. She's bnt lonely, poor thing—no a young person to speak to. It would divert her to see it. I would not forbid you now to give the young leddy the like o' that in a present. Sir Ludovic's our landlord, after a'. He's no an ill landlord, though he's poor. It is aye a fine thing to be civil, and ye never can tell but what a kind action will meet with its reward. I see no reason why you should not take that to Miss Margret in a present," Mrs. Glen said.

For the first time since then he felt himself allowed and authorized person, not in disgrace or under disapprobation of all men, as he had hitherto been; and the permission to carry his drawing of the Kirkton to Miss Margaret "in a present" amused him, while it gave at the same time a certain sanction to his engagement to meet her, and show her the other productions of his pencil. Rob had his wits about him more than Margaret had, though not so much as his mother. He was aware that to ask a young lady to meet him at the burn, for what purpose soever, was not exactly what was becoming, and that the advantage he had taken of their childish friendship was perhaps not quite so "like a gentleman" as he wished to be. He could not, indeed, persuade himself that his mother was any authority in such a question; but still the fact that she thought it quite natural that he should carry on his old relations with Margaret, and even encouraged him to make the young lady a present, gave him a sort of fictitious satisfaction. He would affect to take his mother's opinion as his authority, if his conduct was called in question, and thus her ignorance was a bulwark to him. He went out again after his broth, and worked diligently all the afternoon, though Mrs. Glen thought it very unnecessary.

"I'll just spoil it," she said. "The like of you never knows where to stop: either you do nothing at all, or you do a hanlie o'er much."

But on this point Rob took his own way. Certainly, even when you despise the opinion of those around, it is good to be thought well off. The moral atmosphere was lighter round him, and there was the pleasant prospect of meeting Margaret in the evening, and receiving the delightful incense of her admiration; a more agreeable way of filling up this interval of leisure could not have been devised, had his leisure been the most legitimate, the most natural in the world.

While he sat at his drawing in the breezy afternoon, a further sign of the rehabilitation he had undergone was accorded to him. Voices approaching him through the garden, which lay between the house and the west green, prepared him for visitors, and these voices were too familiar to leave him in doubt who the visitors were. It was the Minister, whom Mrs. Glen was leading to the spot where her son was at work on his drawing. "I'll no say that I expected much," said Mrs. Glen, "for I'm not one that thinks everything fine that's done by my ain. I think I'm a' the mair hard to please; bnt, Doctor, when I saw upon the paper the very Kirkton itself! Losh me! there wasn't a house but you would have kent it. Robert Jamieson's and Hugh Macfarlane's, just as like as if you had been standing afore them. It clean beats me how a lad can do that, that has had little time for anything but his studies; for, Doctor, I never heard but that my Rob was a good student. He hasna come to a good issue, which is awfu' mysterious; but a good student he aye was, and there's no a man that kens who will say me nay."

"I am well aware of that," said Dr. Burnside. "It makes it all the more mysterious, as you well say; but let us hope that time and thought will work a change. I'm not one to condemn a young man because he has troubles of mind. We've all had onr experiences," the good man said, as he came through the opening in the hedge

CHAPTER VII.

Rob had not been so light of heart since he made that momentous decision about his profession which had so strangely changed his life.

to the west green, which was nothing more imposing than the "green," technically so called, in which the farmer's household dried its clothes—a green, or, to speak more circumstantially, "a washing green," a square of grass on which the linen could be bleached if necessary, and with posts at each corner for the ropes on which it was suspended to dry, being a necessity of every house in Fife, and throughout Scotland. There was no linen hung out at present to share the breezy green with Rob. He sat on the grass on a three-legged stool he had brought with him; a low hedge ran round the little enclosure, with a little burn purling under its shadow, and beyond were the green fields and the village, with all its reds and blues. Behind him an old ash-tree fluttered its branches and sheltered him from the sun.

"Well, Robert, and how do you do?" said Dr. Burnside. "I have come out to see you, at your mother's instance. She tells me you've developed a great genius for painting. I am very happy to hear of it, but I hope you will not let the siren art lead you away from better things."

"What are better things?" said Rob; "I don't know any," and he got up to respond to the Minister's salutation. Dr. Burnside shook his head.

"That is what I feared," he said. "You must not give up for painting, or any other pleasure of this earth, the higher calling you were first bound to, my good lad. You've served your time to the Church, and what if you have passing clouds that trouble your spirit? Having put your hand to the plough, you must not turn back."

"Eh, that's what I tell him every day o' his life," said Mrs. Glen.

"I came on purpose to have a long conversation with you," said the Minister. "Yes, very pretty, very pretty. I am no judge of paintings myself, but I've no doubt it's very well done. I need not tell you I'm very sorry for all that's come and gone; but I cannot give up the hope, Robert, that you will see the error of your ways. I cannot think a promising lad like you will continue in a wrong road."

"If it is a wrong road," said Rob.

"Whisht, lad, and hearken what the Minister says; but before I go in, Doctor, look at the picture. Is't no wonderful? There's your ain very trees, and the road we've ga'en to the kirk as long as I can mind, and a' the whigmaleeries of the auld steple. Na, I put nae faith in it at first, no me! but when I saw it, just a bit senseless paper, good for nothin' in itself! Take a good look at it, Doctor. It's no like the kind of thing ye'll see every day."

"Yes, Mrs. Glen," said the Minister, "I do not doubt it is very pretty. I am no judge myself. I would like to hear what Sir Claude would say; he is a great connoisseur. But it was not about pictures, however pretty, that I was wanting to speak to Robert. My good lad, put away your bonnie view and all your paints for a moment, and take a walk down to the Manse with me. I would like to satisfy myself how you stand, and perhaps a little conversation might be of use. There is nothing so good for clearing the cobwebs out of the mind, as just entering into the state of the case with a competent person, one that understands you, and knows what to advise."

"That is what I aye said when all thae professors in Glasgow was taighling at him; the Doctor at hame would understand far better, that is what I aye said. Go with the Minister, Rob, and pay great attention. I'll carry in the things. But I wish ye would take a good look at the picture, Doctor; and ye'll no keep him too long, for he has a friend to see, and two-three things to do. You'll mind that, Rob, my man."

Never since the fatal letter which disclosed his apostasy had his mother addressed him before as "my man." And Rob knew that the Doctor was not strong in argument. He went with him across the fields he had just been putting into his sketch, with an easy mind. He was fond of discussion, like every true-born Scotsman, and here at least he was pretty sure of having the victory. Mrs. Glen, for her part, carried in "the paints" with a certain reverence. She put the sketch against the wall of the parlor, and contemplated it with pride, which was a still warmer sentiment than her pleasure. It was "our Rob" that had done that; nobody else in the country-side was so clever. It was true that Sir Claude was a connoisseur, as the Minister said, and was supposed to know a great deal about art, but nobody had ever seen a picture of his to be compared with this of "our Rob's." Mrs. Glen set the sketch against the wall, and got her knitting and sat down opposite to it, not to worship, but to build castles upon that foundation, which was not much more satisfactory than Alnascher's basket of eggs. The thought passed through her mind, indeed, that he who could do so much in this accidental and chance way, what might he not have done had he followed out his original vocation? which was a grievous thought. But then it never could have been in Rob's way to be Archbishop of Canterbury, or anything but a parish minister, like the Doctor himself; whereas, perhaps, with this unsuspected new gift, and out of his very idleness and do-nothingness, who could tell what might come? Mrs. Glen's imagination was of a vulgar kind, but it enabled her to follow out a perfectly feasible and natural line of events, and to settle what her own line of conduct was to be with admirable good sense: not to press him, not to put herself forward as arranging anything, not to interfere with the young lady, but to wait and see how things would happen. Nothing could be more simple. The end was a mist of confusion before the farmer-woman's eyes. Perhaps she fell asleep, nodding over her half-knitted stocking in the drowsiness of the afternoon; but if so, a vague vision of "our Rob" turned into Sir Robert, and reigning at Earl's-hall, glistened at the end of that vista. How he could be Sir Robert, by what crown matrimonial he could be invested with the title and the lands of which Ludovic Leslie, and not Margaret, was the heir, we need not try to explain. The dreamer herself could not have explained it, nor did she try; and perhaps she had fallen asleep, and was not accountable for the fancies that had got into her drowsy brain.

As for Rob, he had a long conversation with the Minister, and posed him as he had intended and foreseen. Dr. Burnside's theology was ponderous, and his information a trifle out of date. Even in the ordinary way of reasoning, his argu-

ments were more apt to unsettle the minds of good believers and make the adversary rejoice, than to produce any more satisfactory result; and it may be supposed that he was not very well prepared for the young sceptic, trained in new strongholds of learning which the good Doctor knew but by name. Dr. Burnside shook his puzzled head when he went into the Manse to tea. "You're a clever lad," he said to his wife, "I sometimes think the devil always gets the cleverest."

"Well, Doctor," said Mrs. Burnside, who was a very strong theologian, "have you forgotten that the foolish things of this earth are to confound the strong?"

But the Doctor only shook his head. He did not like to think of himself as one of the foolish things of this earth, even though by so doing he might have a better hope of confounding the audacious strength of Rob Glen. But he pondered much upon the subject, and polished up his weapons in private, going through many an argument in his own mind, which was more successful, and preparing snares and pitfalls for the young heretic. He had patronized Rob when Rob was orthodox, but he respected him now as he had never done before.

"I think I will preach my sermon on the fig-tree next Sabbath morning," he said to his wife after tea. "I think that will stagger him, if anything can."

"Well, Doctor," Mrs. Burnside replied, "it will always be a pleasure to hear it; but I fear Robert Glen is one of those whose ears are made heavy, that they cannot hear."

The Doctor shook his head again, out of respect to the Scriptures; but he was not so hopeless. Perhaps he believed in his sermon on the fig-tree more than his wife did, and he felt that to gain back the young man who had baffled him would be indeed a crown of glory. He spent an hour in his study that night looking up other sermons which specially suited the case. It gave him an interest in his sermons which he had not felt since Sir Claude gave up coming to the parish church, and seceded to the Episcopal chapel in St. Rule's. That had been a distressing event to the good Doctor, but he had got over it, and now providence had been kind enough to send him a young unbeliever to convince. Perhaps the good folks of the Kirkton and the parish generally would have heard of this looking up of the old discourses with some apprehension; but the Doctor wrote a new introduction to the sermon on the fig-tree, and that was some little gain at least.

Rob left his pastor with less respectfulness than the good Doctor felt for him. After running the gauntlet of the professors, and receiving all the attention he had received as the representative of honest doubt, it is not to be supposed that Dr. Burnside could impress him much, and he took up a great deal of time with his feeble argumentations. When, however, the Minister invited him to come to the Manse to tea, Rob made a very pretty speech about his mother. "She has been very kind to me, though I know I have disappointed her," he said, "and I must not leave her alone. I don't think I can leave her alone."

"That's the finest thing you've said, Robert," said the Doctor. "I see your heart is right, al-

though your head is all wrong;" and with this they parted, and the good man came in to look over his sermons. As for Rob, he hurried home to collect some sketch-books for Margaret's benefit, and would not share his mother's tea, notwithstanding his pretty speech. But it was astonishing how tolerant Mrs. Glen had grown. She shook her head, but she did not insist upon the bread-and-butter.

"I'll have something ready for your supper if you havena time now," she said; and entreated him to take the block with to-day's drawing, which she thought might be offered "in a present" to the young lady.

"Not that, mother," said Rob, "not till it is finished."

"Finished!" she said, with a disdain which was complimentary; "what would you have? You canna mend it. It's just the Kirkton itself."

And she would have liked him to put on his best black coat when he went to meet Miss Margaret, and the tall hat he wore on Sundays. "When you have good claes, why should ye no wear them? She should see that you ken the fashion and can keep the fashion with the best—as my poor purse will feel when the bill comes in," she added, with a sigh. But at last Rob managed to escape in his ordinary garments, and with the sketches he had chosen. After the events of the day, which had been a kind of crisis in his career, Rob's mind was full of a pleasant excitement; all things seemed once more to promise well for him—if only this little lady of romance would keep her promise. Would she come again? or had he been flattering himself, supposing a greater interest in her mind than really existed, or a greater freedom in her movements? He lingered about for some time, watching the sun as it lighted up the west, and began to paint the sky with crimson and purple; and as he watched it, Rob was natural enough and innocent enough to forget most other things. Who could attempt to put that sky upon paper? There was all the fervor of first love in his enthusiasm for art, and as he pondered what color could give some feeble idea of such a sky, he thought no more of Margaret. What impossible combination could do it? And if it was done, who would believe in it? He looked at the growing glory with that despair of the artist which is in itself a worship. Rob was not an artist to speak of, yet he had something of the "feeling" which makes one, and all the enthusiasm of a beginner just able to make some expression of his delight in the beauty round him; and there is no one who sees that beauty so clearly, and all the unimaginable glories of the atmosphere, the clouds and shadows, the wonderful varieties of color of which our northern heaven is capable, as the artist, however humble. He was absorbed in this consideration, wondering how to do it, wondering if he ever could succeed in catching that tone of visionary light, that touch of green amidst the blue—or whether he would not be condemned as an impostor if he tried, when suddenly his book of sketches was softly drawn out of his hand. Looking round with a start, he saw Margaret by his side. She had stolen upon him ere he was aware, and her laugh at having taken him by surprise changed into her habitual sudden blush as she caught his eye.

"You need not mind me," she said, confused. "I am very happy, looking at the pictures. Are you trying to make a picture out of that sky?"

"If I could," he said; "but I don't know how to do it; and if I did, it would not be believed, though people see the sunset every day. Did you ever see a Turner, Miss Margaret? Do you know he was the greatest artist—one of the greatest artists?"

"I have heard his name; but I never saw any pictures, never one except our own, and a few in other houses. I have heard, or rather I have read that name. Did he paint landscapes like you?"

"Like me!" Rob laughed. "You don't know what you are saying. I am a poor creature, a beginner, a fellow that knows nothing. But he!—and he is very fond of sunsets, and paints them; but he dared no more have done that—"

Margaret looked up curiously into the western heavens. It was "all aflame," and the glow of it threw a warm reflection upon her as she looked up wistfully, with a look of almost infantile, suddenly awakened wonder. Her face was very grave, startled, and full of awe, like one of Raphael's child-angels. The idea was new to her. She, who thought these sketches so much more interesting than the sunset, it gave her a new sensation to hear of the great artist who had never dared to represent that which the careless heavens accomplish every day. Some floating conception of the greatness of that great globe of sky and air which kept herself suspended a very atom in its vastness, and of the littleness of any man's attempt at representing it, came suddenly upon her, then floated away again, leaving her as eager as ever over Rob Glen's poor little sketches. She turned them over with hurried hands. Some were of scenes she did not know, the lochs and hills of the West Highlands, which filled her with delight, and now and then an old tumble-down house, which interested her less.

"Would you like to draw Earl's-hall?" she said. "I know you have it done in the distance. But it is grand in the distance, and close at hand it is not so grand, it is only funny. Perhaps you could make a picture, Mr.—Glen, of Earl's-hall?"

"I should very much like to try. Might I try? Perhaps Sir Ludovic might not like it."

"Papa likes what I like," said Margaret. But then she paused. "There is Bell. You know Bell, Mr.—Glen."

She made a little pause before his name, and he smiled. Perhaps it was better that she should not be so easily familiar and call him Rob. The touch of embarrassment was more attractive.

"Bell," she added, with a little furtive smile, avoiding his look, "is more troublesome than papa; and she will go and speak to papa when she takes it into her head."

"Then you do not like Bell? I am wrong, I am very wrong; I see it. You did not mean that!"

"Not like—Bell? What would happen if you did not care for those that belong to you?"

"But Bell is only your servant—only your house-keeper."

Margaret closed the sketch-book, and looked at him with indignant eyes.

"I cannot tell you what Bell is," she said. "She is just Bell. She took care of my mother, and she takes care of me. Who would be like Bell to me, if it were the Queen? But sometimes she scolds," she added, suddenly, coming down in a moment from her height of seriousness; "and if you come to Earl's-hall, you must make friends with Bell. I will tell her you want to draw the house. She would like to see a picture of the house, I am sure she would; and, Mr. Glen," said Margaret, timidly, looking up in his face, "you promised—but perhaps you have forgotten—you promised to learn me—"

(Learn, by one of the curious turns of meaning not uncommon over the Border, means teach in Scotch, just as to hire means to be hired.)

"Forgotten!" said Rob, his face, too, glowing with the sunset. "If you will only let me! The worst is that you will soon find out how little I know."

"Not when I look at these beautiful pictures," said Margaret, opening the sketch-book again. "Tell me where this is. It is a little dark loch, with hills rising and rising all round; here there is a point out into the water with a castle upon it, all dim and dark; but up on the hills the sun is shining. Oh, I would like, I would like to see it! What bonnie places there must be in the world!"

"It is in the Highlands. I wish I could show you the place," said Rob. "The colors on the hills are far beyond a poor sketch of mine. They are like a beautiful poem."

Margaret looked up at him again with a misty sweetness in her eyes, a recognition, earnest and happy, of another link of union.

"Do you like poetry *too*?" she said.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARGARET went home that evening with her head more full than ever of the new incident which had come into her life. More full of that, but not quite so much occupied, perhaps, by the thought of her new acquaintance. She had all the eagerness of a child to begin her studies, to learn how to make pictures as he did, and this for the moment took everything that was dangerous out of the new conjunction of young man and young woman which was quite unfamiliar to her, but which had vaguely impressed her on their first meeting. She came home this time no longer in a dream of roused and novel feeling, but with definite aims before her; and when she found Bell, as usual, seated outside the door in the little court, Margaret lost no time in opening the attack on the person whom she knew to be the most difficult and unlikely to be convinced.

"Bell!" she cried, running in, breathless with eagerness, "something is going to happen to me. Listen, Bell! I am going to learn to draw."

"Bless me, bairn!" cried Bell, drawing back her chair in semi-alarm. "Is that a'? I thought you were going to tell me the French were coming. No that the French have any thought of coming nowadays, pair bodies; they've ower muckle to do with themselves."

"Bell, you don't take the trouble to think about me, and I am so happy about it. There

never was a time that I did not care for pictures. And there's a view of Earl's-hall from the Kirkton, and I cannot tell how many more. You know I always was fond of pictures, Bell."

"No me! I never knew you had seen only, Miss Margaret," said Bell, placidly; "but for my part, I'm sure I've no objection. I would like it far better if it was the piano; but education's aye a grand thing, however it comes. Can do is easy carried about."

"And will you speak to papa?" said Margaret. "Bell, I wish you would speak to papa; for he jokes at me, and calls me little Peggy, and you know I am not little, but quite grown up."

"Oh, ay, as auld as him or me—in your ain conceit," said Bell; "but whist! my bonnie doo—I wasna meaning to vex you. And what am I to speak to Sir Ludovic about?"

A slight embarrassment came over Margaret. She began to fidget from one foot to another, and a sudden wave of color flushed over her face. It did not mean anything. Was it not the trouble of her life that she blushed perpetually—blushed for nothing at all, with every fresh thought that rushed upon her, with every new impulse? It was her way of showing every emotion. Nevertheless this time it made her feel uncomfortable, as if it might mean something more.

"I told you," she said; "it is about learning to draw, and about letting him come here to show me the way."

"Letting him come! that's another story; and who's him?" said Bell. She made a rapid mental review of the county while she spoke—puzzled, yet not disconcerted; there was nobody of whom the severest duenna could be afraid. There was Sir Claude—known to be very fond of pictures—but Sir Claude was a douce married man, who was very unlikely to take the trouble, and even if he did, would hurt nobody. "Na, I canna think. Young Randal Burnside he's away; that was the only lad in the countryside like to be evened to our Miss Margaret, and him no half or quarter good enough. Na, ye mann tell me; there's no him in the country that may not come and go free for anything I care."

"Why should you care?" said Margaret. "But I will tell you who it is. It is Rob Glen—Mrs. Glen's son, at Earl's-lee. He used to play with me when I was little, and I saw him drawing a picture. And then he told me who he was, and then he said he would learn me to draw, if I liked to learn—and you may be sure I would like to learn, Bell. Fancy! to take a bit of paper out of a book, and put this house upon it or any other house, and all the woods, and the hills, and the sky. Look at that puff of cloud! it's all rosy and like a flower; but in a moment it will be gray, and next moment it will be gone; but if you draw it you have it forever. It's wonderful, wonderful, Bell!"

"Rob Glen," said Bell, musing. She paid no attention to Margaret's poetical outburst. "Rob Glen—that's him that was to be a minister; but something's happened to him; he's no conductit himself as he ought, or else he tired of the notion, and he's at hame doing naething." Bell paused after this historical sketch. "He wasna an ill laddie. He was very good to you, Miss

Margret, when you were but a little troublesome thing, greeting for drinks of water, and asking to be carried, and wanting this and wanting that, just what puts a body wild with bairns."

"Was I?" said Margaret, with wide-opened eyes. "No! Rob never thought me a trouble. You might do so," she added, with offence. "I cannot tell for you, but I am sure Rob—"

"I weel believe he never said a word. He was great friends with you, I mind well—oh, great friends. And so he wants to learn you to draw—or you want him? I see nae great objection," said Bell, doubtfully. "He's a young man, but then you're a leddy far above him; and you're old friends, as you say. I will not say but what I would rather he was marrit, Miss Margaret; but I see nae great objection—"

"Married!" said Margaret, her eyes bigger than ever with wonder and amusement—"married!" She laughed, though she could scarcely have told why. The idea amused her beyond measure. There was something piquant in it, something altogether absurd. Rob! But why the idea was so ridiculous she could not say. Bell looked at her in her laughter with a certain doubt.

"Why should he no be married?" she said; "lads of that kind marry young—they've naething to wait for: the moment they get a kirk it's a' they can look for—very different from some. I dinna ken what Sir Ludovic may say," she added, doubtfully. "Sir Ludovic has awfu' high notions; a farmer's son to learn a Leslie. I canna tell how he'll take it."

"Bell!" cried Margaret, with indignation, "when you know it's you that have the high notions! Papa would never think of anything of the kind; but if you go and put them into his head, and tell him what to think—"

"Lord bless the bairn, me!" cried Bell, with the air of being deeply shocked; and then she got up and went back into her kitchen, which was her stronghold. Margaret, for her part, slightly discouraged, but still eager, stole upstairs. If Bell was against her, it did not matter very much who was on her side. She went softly into the long room where her father was reading. Would it ever happen to her, she wondered, to sit still in one place and read, whatever might be going on—never thinking what was happening outside, untroubled whether it rained or was fine, whether it was summer or winter? Though she came in and roamed about softly, in a kind of subdued restlessness, looking over the book-shelves, and flitting from window to window, Sir Ludovic took no notice. With her own life so warm in her, it was stranger and stranger to Margaret to see that image of the calm of age; how strange it was! He had not moved even, since she came into the room, while she was so restless, so eager, thinking nothing in the world so important as her present fancy. When she had fluttered about for some time without attracting his notice, she grew impatient. "Papa, I want to speak to you," she said.

"Eh? Who is that—?" Sir Ludovic roused up as if he had been asleep; "you, little Peggy?"

"Yes; were you sleeping? I wondered and wondered that you never saw me."

"I don't think I was asleep," he said, with a

little confusion. "To tell the truth, I do get drowsy sometimes lately, and I don't half like it," he added, in an undertone.

"You don't like it?" said Margaret: she was not uneasy, but she was sympathetic. "But then don't do it, papa; come and take a little walk with me"—(here she paused, remembering that to-night, for instance, Sir Ludovic would have been much out of place), "or a turn in the garden, like John."

Sir Ludovic paid not much attention to what she said: he rubbed his eyes, and raised his head, shaking himself with a determination to overcome the drowsiness, which was a trouble to him. "You must sit with me more, my little girl, and make a noise; a little sound is life-like. This stillness gets like"—(he made a pause; was the first word that occurred to him an unpleasant one, not such as was agreeable to pronounce?)—"like sleep," he added, after a moment, "and I have no wish to go to sleep."

"Sleeping is not pleasant in the daytime," said Margaret, unintentionally matter-of-fact. The old man gave a slight shiver, which she did not understand. It was no longer the daytime with him, and this was precisely why he disliked his unconscious doze; was it not a sign that night was near? He raised himself in his chair, and with the almost mechanical force of habit began to turn over the leaves of the book before him. It was evident he had not heard her appeal. She stood by for a moment not saying anything, then pulled his sleeve gently.

"Papa! it was something I had to say."

"Ay, to be sure. You wanted something, my little Peggy? what was it? There are not many things I can do, but if it is within my power—"

"Papa! how strange to speak to me so—you can do everything I want," said the girl. "And this is what it is: I want—don't be very much astonished—to learn to draw."

"To draw? I am afraid I am no good in that respect, and cannot teach you, my dear."

"You? Oh no! But there is one that would learn me."

"My little Peggy, you are too Scotch—say teach."

"Very well, teach if you like, papa; what does the word matter? But may he come to the house, and may I have lessons? I think it is the only thing that is wanted to make me perfectly happy."

Sir Ludovic smiled. "In that case you had better begin at once. Mr. Ruskin himself ought to teach you, after such a sentiment. At once, my Peggy! for I would have you perfectly happy if I could. Poor child, who knows what may happen after," he said, meditatively, putting his hand upon her arm and smoothing the sleeve caressingly. Margaret, occupied with her own thoughts, did not take in the meaning of this; but she was vaguely discouraged by the tone.

"You are not like yourself, papa; what has happened?" she said, almost impatiently. "You are not—ill? It is waking up, I suppose."

"Just that—or going to sleep—one or the other. No, no, I am not ill; yet—And let us be comfortable, my little girl. Draw? Yes, you shall learn to draw, and sit by me, quiet as a little mouse with bright eyes."

"You said just now I was to make a noise."

"To be sure, so I did. I say one thing one moment, and another the next; but, after all, they are much the same. So you sit by me, you may be quiet or make a noise—it will be all the same. Your noises are quiet, my Peggy. Your sleeve rustling, your hand moving, and a little impatience now and then, a start and a shake of your little head. These are noises an old man likes when Providence has given him a little girl."

"But really," said Margaret, with a crease in her forehead, "really! I am grown-up—I am not a little girl!"

"Well, my Peggy! it will be so much the better for you," he said, patting her sleeve. Margaret was vaguely chilled by this acquiescence, she could scarcely tell why; and the slight pain made her impatient, calling up a little anger, causeless and vague as itself.

"Don't, papa," she said. "You are not like yourself. I don't know what is the matter with you. Then, he may come?"

"Yes, yes, at once," said Sir Ludovic, with a dreamy smile; then he said, "But who is it?" as if this mattered little. Altogether, Margaret felt he was not like himself.

"Do you remember Rob Glen, papa, the son of Mrs. Glen at Earl's-lee? He used to play with me when I was a child; he was always very kind to me. Oh, don't shake your head; you must mind him. Robert Glen at the farm?"

"I mind, as you say—Scotch, Scotch, little Peggy; you should not be so Scotch—a Robert Glen who took the farm thirty or forty years ago. By-the-bye, the lease must be almost out; but how you are to get drawing or anything else out of a rough farmer—"

"Papa!"—Margaret put her hand upon his shoulder with impatience—"how could it be a Robert Glen of thirty or forty years ago? He is only a little older than me. He played with me when I was a little girl. He is perhaps the son, or he may be the grandson. He is a little older than me."

"Get your pronouns right, my little Peggy. Ah! the son; *va pour le fils*," said Sir Ludovic, with a drowsy smile, and turned back to his book. Margaret stood for a moment with her hand on his shoulder, looking at him with that irritation which is the earliest form of pain. A vague uneasiness came into her mind, but it was so veiled in this impatience that she did not recognize it for what it was. The only conscious feeling she had was, how provoking of papa! not to take more interest, not to ask more, not to say anything. Then she dropped her hand from his shoulder and turned away, and went to sit in the window with the first chance book she could pick up. She was not thinking much about the book. She was half annoyed and disappointed to have got her own way so easily. Had he understood her? Margaret did not feel quite happy about this facile assent. It made of Rob Glen no wonder at all, no disturbing individuality. He was something more, after all, than Sir Ludovic thought. What was all her own tremor for, if it was to be lightly met with a *va pour le fils*? She was not satisfied; and indeed the little rustlings of her impatience, her subdued movements, as she sat behind, did all for her father that he wanted. They kept him awake. The drowsiness which comforted him, yet which he was afraid of, fled before this little thrill of

movement. Even if she had been altogether quiet, is there not a thrill and reverberation in the air about a thinking creature? Sir Ludovic was kept awake and alive by the consciousness of another near him, living in every nerve, filling the silence with a little thrill of independent being. This kept him, not only from dozing, but even from active occupation with his book. After a little while he too began to be restless, turned the pages hastily, then himself turned half round toward her. "My Peggy!" he said. In a moment she was standing by his side.

"What is it? Did you want me, papa?"

"No, it is nothing, only to see that you were there. I heard you, that was all; and in the sound there was something strange, like a spirit behind me—or a little mouse, as I said before."

"Had I better go away? would you rather be without me?"

"No, my little girl; but sit in my sight, that I may not be puzzled. The thing is that I can feel you thinking, my Peggy."

"Papa! I was not thinking so much—not of anything in particular, not to disturb you."

"No, my dear, I am not complaining; they were very soft little thoughts, but I heard them. Sit now where I can see you, and all will go right."

"Yes, papa. And you are sure you have no objections?" Margaret said, after a moment's pause, standing by him still.

"To what? to the teaching of the drawing? Oh, no objections—not the least objection."

"And you don't mind him coming to the house—I mean—Mr. Glen?"

"Is there any reason why I should mind?" the old man asked, quickly, rousing into something like vigilance.

"Oh no, papa; but I thought perhaps because he was not—the same as us—because he was only—the farmer's son."

"This is wisdom; this is social science: this is worthy of Jean and Grace," said Sir Ludovic. "My little Peggy! I do not know, my child. Is this all out of your own head?"

At this Margaret drooped a little, with one of her usual overwhelming blushes. "It was Bell," she said; but was it indeed all Bell? Some instinct in her had made a more penetrating suggestion, but she could not tell this to her father. She waited with downcast eyes for his reply.

"Ah, it was Bell. I am glad my little Peggy was not so clever and so far-seeing: now run and play, my little girl, run away and play," he said, dismissing her in his usual tone. She had roused him at last to his ordinary mood, and neither he nor she thought more of his desire that she should stay in his sight. Margaret went away with her heart beating to the west chamber, which was her legitimate sitting-room. She was half ashamed of her own fears about Rob, which her father had treated so lightly. Was it entirely Bell that had put it into her head that this new visitor might be objected to? And was it entirely because he was the farmer's son? Margaret was too much puzzled and confused to be able to answer these questions. She was like a little ship setting out to sea without any pilot. An instinct in her whispered the necessity for guidance, whispered some faint doubts whether this step she was taking was a right

one; but what could the little ship do when the man at the helm was so tranquilly careless? At seventeen is one wiser than at seventy-five? It is not only presumptuous, it is irreligious to think so. And when her own faint doubt was laughed at by her father as being of the order of the ideas of Jean and Grace, what could Margaret do but be ashamed of it? Jean and Grace were emblems of the conventional and artificial to Sir Ludovic. He could not speak of them without a laugh, though they were his children; neither did they approve of their father—with some reason it may be thought.

Thus it was settled that Rob Glen should have access to Earl's-hall. Bell shook her head, but she did not interfere. "It will divert the bairn," she said to herself, "and I can aye keep my eye upon him." What was the need of disturbing Sir Ludovic, honest man? The Leslies had their faults, Bell reflected, but falling in love beneath them was not their weakness. They were very friendly, but very proud. "As sweet and as kind to the poorest body as if they were their own kith and kin; but it's hitherto mayst thou come, and no a step furdur," said Bell; "that's the way o' them all. Even our Miss Margaret, I would advise nobody to go too far with her. She's very young. She disna understand herself; but as for the canaile, I would not counsel them to come near by our young leddy, simple as she is; there's just an instinct; it's in the Leslie blood."

Thus all went smoothly in this first essay of wilfulness. Father and old duenna both consented that the risk should be run. But in Margaret's own mind there was one pause of hesitation. Had there been any opposition to her will she would have upheld Rob Glen to the utmost, and insisted upon her drawing-lessons; but as it was, there came a check to her eagerness which she did not understand, a subtle sort of hinderance in her path, a hesitation—because no one else hesitated. Was that all?

From this it will be seen that the ladies Jean and Grace were not so wrong as was supposed at Earl's-hall, when they shook their heads over their father's proceedings, and declared that he was not capable of being trusted with the charge of a young girl. Any young girl would have been rather unsafe in such hands, but a girl with money, a girl who was an heiress! As for Sir Ludovic, he went on serenely with his reading, or dozed over his book in the long room, and took no notice, or thought no more of the new teacher Margaret had got for herself. He was very glad she should do anything that pleased her. Now and then he was anxious, and his mind was occupied by the drowsiness which came over him. He did not like this, it was not a good sign. It made his mind uneasy, for he was an old man, and knew he could not go on forever, and the idea of death was far from pleasant to him. This he was anxious about, but about his child he was not anxious. She was not going to die, or anything to happen to her. She had a long time before her, in which, no doubt, many things would happen; and why should her father begin so early to make himself uncomfortable about her? He did not see the use.

CHAPTER IX.

WHILE these events were going on in the long room, and up the spiral stairs, thoughts not less important to her than those that moved her young mistress were going on in the head of Jeanie, the young maid-servant at Earl's-hall. Jeanie had been chosen as her assistant by Bell on account of her excellent character and antecedents, and the credit and respectability of all belonging to her. "An honest man's daughter," Bell said, "a man just by-ordinary;" and the girl herself was so well spoken of, so pretty spoken in her own person, with such an artless modesty in the soft chant of her voice, true Fife and of the East Neuk, that there had been nothing to say against the wisdom of the choice. Jeanie was always smiling, always good-humored, fresh as a rose and as clean, singing softly about her work, with the natural freedom yet sweet respectfulness which makes a Scotch lass so ingratiating an attendant. Jeanie could not have waited even upon a stranger without a certain tender anxiety and affectionate interest—a desire not only to please, but to "pleasure" the object of her cares, *i. e.*, to give them pleasure with sympathetic divining of all they wanted. Whether it was her "place" or not to do one thing or another, what did it matter? Her own genuine pleasure in the cleanness and neatness she spread round her, and in the comfort of those she served, reached the length of an emotion. It did her heart good to bring order out of chaos, to make dimness bright, and to clear away stain and spot out of her way. She had been two years at Earl's-hall, and before that had been away as far as the west country, where her mother's friends were. Jeanie was her father's only daughter, and great was his comfort and rejoicing when she came back to be so near him; for John Robertson was not well enough off to keep her with him at home, nor could he have thought it good for Jeanie to keep her in his little cottage "learning naething," as he said. Perhaps there had risen upon Jeanie's bright countenance some cloud of uneasiness during these recent days; at least it had occurred to Bell, she could scarcely tell how, that something more than usual was in the girl's mind. "It'll do you good to go and have a crack with your father," she had said, the day after Margaret's second meeting with Rob Glen. Perhaps Bell wanted to have her young lady all to herself—perhaps it was only consideration for Jeanie.

"You can go as soon as the dinner is up," she said, "and take the old man a print o' our sweet butter and twa-three eggs. It'll please him to see you mind upon him."

"No me, but you," said Jeanie; "and I'm real obliged to you, Bell."

Perhaps a rigid moralist would have said it was not Bell, but Sir Ludovic, who had the right to send these twa-three eggs; but such a critic would have met with little charity at Earl's-hall, where, indeed, Bell's thrift and care, and notable management, as constant and diligent as if the house-keeping had been her own, kept plenty as well as order in the house; nor did it ever occur to the good woman that she was not free to give as well as to increase this simple kind of household wealth. Jeanie set out in the sum-

mer evening, after six o'clock, when she had delivered the last dish into John's hands. She went along the country road with neither so light a step nor so light a heart as those which had carried Margaret in dreamy pleasantness between the same hedges, all blossomed with the sweet flaunting of the wild rose.

Jeanie, as was natural, being three-and-twenty and a hard-working woman, was more solid and substantial than the Laird's daughter at seventeen; but it would have been difficult to imagine a more pleasant object, or one more entirely suiting and giving expression to the rural road along which she moved, than was Jeanie, a true daughter of the soil. She was not tall or slim, but of middle height, round and neat and well proportioned, with a beautiful complexion, impaired by nothing but a few freckles, and golden-brown hair, much more "in the fashion," with its crisp undulations and luxuriant growth, than the brown silky locks of her young mistress. Dark eyes and eyelashes gave a touch of higher beauty to the fair, fresh face, which had no particular features, but an air of modesty, honesty, sweet good temper, and kindness very delightful to behold. She was "a bonnie lass," no more, not the beauty or reigning princess of the neighborhood, or playing any fatal rôle in the country-side. Jeanie was too good, too simple and kind, for any such position; but she was a bonnie lass, and "weel respectit," and had her suitors like another.

As she went along by herself in that perfect ease of solitude, unseen by any eye, which subdues all instincts of pride and self-command, a vague cloud became visible on her face. The smile with which she met her little world, true always, yet true sometimes rather in the sense of self-denial than of fact, faded away; her simple countenance grew serious, a curve of anxiety came into her forehead, not deadly anxiety, such as wrings the heart, but a wistfulness and longing for something unattained; for something, perhaps, which ought to be attained, and which might end in being a wrong if withheld from her. Nothing so abstruse as this could be read in Jeanie's face, which would besides have cleared up and awoke into the soft sunshine of friendly response, had any one met her; but as she went on alone, with nobody to see, there was a gravity in her eyes, a wistfulness in the look which she cast along the field-path which Margaret had followed so pleasantly, which was not like Jeanie. Was she looking for some one who ought to be coming along that green and flowery path? She breathed out a soft little sigh as she went on. "My faither will ken," Jeanie said to herself; and though there was this anxiety in her face, a certain languor was in her step, as of one by no means confident that the news she is going to seek will be comforting to hear.

The Kirkton, to which Jeanie was bound, and of which Rob Glen had made so many sketches, was, as already said, an irregular village surrounding the kirk from which it took its name, and built upon a mound, which stood eminent over the low rich fields of Stratheden. The greater portion of the church was new, and quite in accordance with the eighteenth-century idea of half-barn-half-meeting-house which, unfortunately, in so many cases represents the parish church in Scotland. But this was all the worse

in the present case, from being added on to a beautiful relic of the past, the chancel of an old Norman church, still in perfect preservation, not resenting, but silently indicating with all the force of fact, the incredible difference between the work of the united and catholic past, and the expedient of a Scotch heritor to house at the smallest possible cost, the national worship which he himself is too fine to share. The little round apsis of the original church, with its twisted arches and toothed ornaments, brown with age and lichen, and graceful, natural decay, was the only part of it visible from the road along which our Jeanie was coming. Jeanie neither knew nor cared for the Norman arches, but the grassy mound that rose above her head, with its grave-stones, and the high steps which led up to it, upon which the children clustered, were dear and familiar to her eyes.

At the foot of the kirk steps was a road which led to "the laigh toun," a little square or *place*—semi-French, as are so many things in Scotland—surrounded by cottages; while the road, which wound round the base of the elevation on which the church stood, took in "the laigh toun," in which was the post-office and the shop, and the "Leslie Arms," and two or three two-storied houses, vulgar and ugly in their blue slates, which were the most important dwellings in the Kirkton. Jeanie, however, had nothing to do with these respectable erections; her steps were turned toward the high town, where her father's cottage was. Everybody knew her on the familiar road. "Is that you, Jeanie?" the men said, going home from their work with long leisurely tread, which looked slow, yet devoured the way. The children on the kirk steps "cried upon her" with one voice, or rather with one chant, modulating the long-drawn vowels with the native sing-song of Fife. Even Dr. Burnside, walking stately down the brae, shedding a wholesome awe about him, with hands under his coat-tails, stopped to speak to her.

"Your father is very well, honest man," the Doctor said. When she reached the little square beyond the church, where the women were sitting at their doors in the soft evening air, or standing in groups, each with her stocking, talking across the open space like one family, a universal greeting arose.

"Eh, Jeanie, lass, you're a sight for sair een!" they cried. "Eh, but the auld man will be pleased to see you!" and "He's real weel, Jeanie, my woman," was added by various voices. This was evidently the point on which she was supposed to be anxious. The girl nodded to them all with friendly salutations. They had their little bickerings, no doubt, now and then; but were they not one family, each knowing everything that concerned the others?

"I'm real pleased to see you a', neebors," Jeanie said; "but I maunna bide. I've come to see my faither."

"That's right, Jeanie, lass," the women said; "he's been a good faither to you, and weel he deserves it at your hand." "Faither and mither baith," said another commentator; and Jeanie went on with a warm light of pleasure and kindness in her face. Perhaps her name in the air had caught her father's ear, though no name was more common than Jeanie, or more often heard in "the laigh toun;" or perhaps it was

that more subtle personal influence which heralds a new-comer—magnetical, electrical, who can tell what?—As she made her way to the end of the square, where it communicated by a steep street with "the laigh toun" below, he came out to his cottage door. He was a tall man, thin and stooping, and very pale, his face sicklied o'er with more than thought. He wore the sign of his trade, a shoemaker's apron, and looked along the line of houses with a wistful expression, like that which Jeanie had worn when she was alone. He was a man "above the common," everybody said, for long years a widower, who had been "faither and mither baith" to his children; and only some of them had repaid poor John. Those of the lads who were good lads had emigrated and gone far out of his neighborhood, and those who were within reach were not models of virtue. But Jeanie had always been his support and stay. His wistful inquiring look yielded to the tenderest pleasure as he perceived her; but there was no enthusiasm of greeting between the father and daughter. Few embracings are to be seen in Scotch peasant families. The cobbler's face lighted up; he said, "Is that you, Jeanie, my bonnie woman?" with a tone that had more than endearment in it. The sight of her brought a glow to his wan face. "You are as good as the blessed sunshine, my lass—and eh, but I'm glad to see you!"

"And me too, faither," said Jeanie. That was their greeting. "They tell me you're real well," she added, as they went in-doors.

"A great deal they ken," said John Robertson, with that natural dislike to be pronounced well by the careless outside world which every invalid shares. "But I'm no that bad either," he added, "and muckle the better for seeing you. Come in and sit you down."

"I have but little time to stay," said Jeanie.

As she went in before him the shade again returned to her face, though only for that moment during which it was unseen. The small window of the cottage gave but a dim greenish light, a sort of twilight after the full glow and gladness outside. But they were used to this partial gloom; and there seemed a consciousness on the father's part as well as the daughter's of something serious that there might be to say. He looked at her closely, yet half stealthily, with the vivacious, dark eyes which lighted up his pale face; but he asked no question. And Jeanie, for her part, said nothing about herself. She asked when he had seen Willie, and if all was well with John, and he replied, shaking his head,

"Oh, ay, weel enough, weel enough for such a ne'er-do-weel."

"No a ne'er-do-weel, faither. Poor laddie! he's so easy led away; but by-and-by he'll tak' a thought and mend."

"Like the de'il—at least, accordin' to Robert Burns. Ay, ay, Jeanie, by-and-by! But maybe he'll break our hearts afore then."

"And Willie, faither?"

"Since Willie listed, I try to think of him nae mair," said the cobbler, with a quiver in his lips; then he added, "But he'll be held weel under authority, as the centurion says in Scripture, and maybe it's the best thing that could have happened for himself."

"That's aye what Bell says—"

"Bell! and what does Bell ken about it—a woman that never had a son! If I were to have my family over again, I would pray for a' lasses, Jeanie, my woman, like you."

"Eh, faither! but you mustna forget Robin and Alick, though they're far away; and a' the lasses are no like me," said Jeanie, with a tear and a smile. "I might have been marriest, and far from hame; or I might have been licht-headed; this she said, with a faith laugh at the idea, and rising blush; for to be anything different from her modest self was half incredible, half alarming. The cobbler shook his head."

"Another might, but no my Jean. But what is sent is the best, if we could but see it, nae doubt, nae doubt."

"And that minds me," she said, abruptly, with a little gasp of rising agitation. Then she stopped herself as quickly; "how is the work getting on? have ye aye plenty jobs to keep ye going, faither?" she added, as by an after-thought.

"No that bad," said the shoemaker. "Plenty wark—pay's no just the same thing. There was three pair last week for Merran Linsay, you ken she's aye to be trusted."

"Trusted!" said Jeanie, "ay, for kindness and a good heart, but for the siller—"

"My heart's wae for the poor decent woman," said John Robertson, "with aye the wolf at her door. The shoes thae bairns gang through! no to speak of other things. How could I bid her depart, and get something elsewhere to put on their feet when she came to me? Would you ca' that Christianity—no that I'm blaming them that can do it," he added, hastily. "Na, whiles I wish I could do it; but nature's mair strong than wishing—"

"You are aye the auld man," said Jeanie, tenderly; "it's real foolish, faither, but I canna blame ye. I like ye a' the better. You would make shoes for a' the parish, and never take a penny."

"Na, na, lass! there you're wrong," he said, briskly. "I charged a shilling mair than the price to auld Will Heriot, nae further gane than Friday last. He was in an awfu' hurry, and awfu' ill tempered. I put on a shilling," said the cobbler, with a low laugh. "In the abstract it wasna right, and I'll no say but I may gie it back; but the auld Adam is strong now and then."

"No half strong enough," said Jeanie. "I wouldna gie him back, no a brass farden." Then she paused, and her countenance changed again—that scarcely perceptible darkening, paling, came over it, and this time she spoke quickly, with a little almost impatient determination, as if resolved not to allow herself any more to be crushed and silenced by herself. "Faither," she said, "you'll ken he's come back. Have you heard anything of Rob Glen?"

"Not a word, Jeanie, no a word. I thought that was what you were coming to tell me."

There was a pause—Jeanie said nothing. She turned her face away, and made believe to look out at the dim little window, while the cobbler, with the delicacy of a prince, turned in the other direction that he might not seem to watch her.

"It's a long time since the lad has been hame," he said, with a slight tremor in his voice. "He will have many things to take him up; and his mother—his mother's a proud woman; he knows

neither you nor me would welcome him against the will o' his ain folk."

"It's no that, faither," said Jeanie, with a low sound like a sob, which escaped her unawares.

"It's no that. The like of that is nothing. Am I one that would judge a hard judgment? It's no that."

"You would never mean it, Jeanie, my bonnie woman; but when the heart is troubled the judgment's a' aje. You maun possess your soul in patience; maist things come right one way or anither to them that will wait."

Jeanie gave a weary sigh, the light dying out of her face. She kept gazing out of the little window, in a strained attitude, with the tears unseen, blinding her eyes. "It was just that I came for," she said, "to see if you could tell me what to do. He has made great friends, I ken na how, with our Miss Margaret, and he's coming to Earl's-ha'; maybe I'll have to open the door till him, maybe I'll have to show him up the stair—to say Sir till him, and never let on he's anything to me." Here a sob once more broke the hurrying current of Jeanie's words.

"What will I do, faither—what will I do?" she cried, with an intense undertone of pain, which made the words tragical in their simplicity—smiling Jeanie, so fair and friendly, turning all at once into a tragic representation (for the millionth time) of disappointed love, and that aching loss which by reason of some lingering possibility of redemption for it, is more hard to bear than despair.

"My bonnie woman!" said the cobbler; the same ring of pain was in his voice; but the very delicacy of his sympathy, and its acuteness, kept him silent. He made another pause: "Jeanie, my lass," he said, "in a' the trials o' this life I've found that true that was said to them that were first sent out to preach the Word. God's awfu' good, to give us the same for the common need as is for the divine. 'Tak' nae thought in that hour what ye will say.' That's aye the guide as long as ye're innocent of harm. It will be put into your mouth what is best."

Jeanie turned upon him wistfully. "Is that a' you have to say to me?—is that a', faither? I want mair than that; will I take the thing just as it comes, or will I haud out o' the way? Will I let him see me, or will I no let him see me? Will I throw it on him to acknowledge me for—a friend: or will I take it on me? See how many things I have to ask! It's no just what to say."

"I maun turn that ower in my mind," said John; and there was a pause. Jeanie, after this little outburst, sat still with her head turned again toward the window, not looking at him, concealing the tears in her eyes, and the agitation of her face, which even to her father was not to be betrayed. As for John, he dropped naturally upon his familiar bench, and took up unconsciously a shoe at which he had been working. The little knock of the hammer was the natural accompaniment to his thinking. Outside, the voices of the neighbors, softened by the summer air, made a murmur of sound through which some word or two fell articulate now and then through the silence. "She kens my mind; but she will gang her ain gait," one woman said to another; and then there arose a cry of "Tak care o' the bairn—it'll fa' and break its neck," and a rush

of feet. All these sounds and a great deal more fell into the silence of the dim cottage room, where nothing but the little tap of the cobbler's hammer disturbed the stillness. Jeanie sat very still, her hands clasped in her lap, the moisture in her eyes, turning over many thoughts in her mind. The time that had been! the day when they met in Glasgow, she a fresh country lass, half friend, half servant, in the house of her relation; he a student, half-gentleman, with his old red gown, the sign of learning, on his arm.

How glad then had Rob been to see Jeanie! And even when he began to have "grand friends," and to eschew his uncle's shop, her smiling looks, her soft sympathy, had kept him always faithful. And Jeanie had not thought very much of the two years of silence since she came back to Fife. They were both young, and she knew that Rob's mother was not likely to smile upon so humble a daughter-in-law. But his return had roused all the past, and the thought of meeting him again had stirred Jeanie's being to the depths. Even this visit had changed the aspect of affairs for her. For it had not seemed possible that Rob could have entirely neglected her father, whom everybody esteemed, and she had come to the Kirkton—honestly to ask counsel in her difficulty, yet not without hope of hearing something that might charm all difficulty away.

"Jeanie," said her father, at last, "whatever we meet with in this world there's aye but one path for right-minded folk. You maun neither flee from your duty nor gang beyond your duty. We've nae business to rin away from trouble because its trouble, but we've nae call to put ourselves in its way. If it's clear that no person can let the lad in but you, open the door till him, take him up the stair—do it, my woman, and never think twice; but if it's no needfu', forbear. And as for leaving it on him to own you for a friend, you must not do that: it would be untruthful on your part, for I hope you're ower weel bred, my bonnie woman, to pass any person you ken without a smile or a pleasant word. You wouldna disown your friend if he turned poor, and why should he, when he's turned rich? or I should say grand in his ways, for rich Rob Glen will never be. Sae it will be but honest when you see the lad to say 'How is a' wi' you, Robin,' or 'I hope you're keeping your health,' or the like of that. Say nothing of other things. Let no lad think you are seeking him; but neither should any lad think you are feared to let it be seen you ken him. Na, I'll hear o' nae concealments; my Jeanie must be as clear as the running water, aye true, and scornin' to deceive. 'Ay,' you'll say, 'Miss Margaret, I ken Robert Glen.'"

"Ay," said the poor girl, with a wistful echo, "I ken Robert Glen!" she shook her head, and the tears with which her eyes were full, brimmed over. "Ay, that do I, faither; I wish I had never kent him, I wish I had never thought so weel of him. Eh, but it's strange—awful strange—to think ane ye ken can deceive! Them ye dinna ken are different. But to say a thing and no to mean it, faither—to give a promise and forget—to mak' a vow before the Lord and think nae mair o't! Can such things be?"

"Such things have been, Jeanie. I'm like you, I cannot believe in them; but they have been. And a' that you and me can do is to

bear whatever comes, and be aye faithful and steady, and wait till you see the end."

"It's sae lang waiting," said Jeanie, with a smile in her wet eyes, as she rose from her seat; "and it's no as if it would be only satisfaction to see them punished for't that do amiss. But fareyewell, faither; I'm muckle the better o' your good advice. Thinkna of me, I'll win through. It's no like a thing that would make a person useless, no fit to do their day's work or get their living. I'll win through."

And the tears were all clear out of her brown eyes, and her smile ready, to meet the world with, when she came out of the dimness of the cottage door. John Robertson stood there watching her as she went along by the neighbors' doors, and it was more from the shadow on his face than on hers that the women divined some trouble in the family.

"Is't about Willie?" they said. "You should speak to your faither, Jeanie, a sensible lass like you. Though he's listed, what's to hinder but he may do real well yet?"

"I had an uncle, as decent a man as ever was, that listed in his young days," said another.

Jeanie received these consolations with her habitual smile.

"I think that too," she said. "There wouldna be so muckle about good sodgers in the Bible if they were all bad men that listed; and so I've telt him."

So close to her heart did she wear it, that nobody suspected Jeanie's own private cincture of care.

CHAPTER X.

"PAPA has no objections," said Margaret, demurely; "he says if you will come he will be—glad to see you." This, however, being an addition made on the spot, she faltered over it, not quite knowing how it was to be supported by fact; and she added, timidly, "Will you really take all that trouble for me? Perhaps I am stupid. I think very likely I am stupid; for I cannot draw anything—I have been trying," she said, with a great blush.

"You have been trying! I should like to see what you have done. If you could have seen my stumbles and blunders, you would have had no respect for me at all," said Rob Glen; "and how I dare now to take upon me to teach you, who probably know more than I do—"

"Oh, I know nothing at all—just nothing at all! What shall we do, Mr.—Glen? I found a book and some pencils. I think there is everything in the world up in the old presses in the high room. What shall we do first? Might I begin with—the house? or a tree?"

"There are some preliminary exercises," said Rob, "that are thought necessary; very simple—drawing straight lines, and curves, and corners. I am sure you will do them all—by instinct."

"Oh!" said Margaret again. Her countenance fell. "But any child would draw straight lines; a straight line is nothing—it is just that," she added, tracing a line in the soft, brown, up-turned earth of the ploughed field through which the path ran. But when Margaret looked at it, she reddened and furtively attempted another,

She had met Rob by the burn as before, and he was walking back with her toward home. The sky was overcast and lowering. The brief interval of lovely weather had for the moment come to an end. Clouds were gathering on all the hills, and the winds sighed about the hedges, heavy with coming rain.

"The furrow is straight," said Rob, "straight as an arrow; that is the ploughman's pride; but it is not so easy to draw a straight line as you think. I have known people who could never do it."

Margaret was crimson with the failure.

"It's me that am stupid!" she cried, in sudden rage with herself. "How do the ploughmen learn to do it? There's nobody to show them the way."

"It's their pride; and it's their trade, Miss Margaret."

"Oh!" cried Margaret, stamping her foot, "it shall be my pride, and my trade too. I will begin to-night when I go home. I will never, never rest till I can do it."

"But it will never be your trade—nor mine," said Rob Glen, with a sigh. "I wish I knew what mine was. You are rich and a lady; but I am a poor man, that must work for my living, and I don't know what I must do."

"If I were you—" said Margaret. As she spoke she blushed, but only because she always did, not with any special signification in it. Rob, however, did not understand this. He saw the glow of color, the sudden brightness, the droop and sensitive fall of the soft eyelids: all things telling of emotion, he thought, as though the supposition, "if I were you," had thrilled the girl's being; and his own heart gave a leap. Did she—was it possible—feel like this for him already? "If I were you," said Margaret, musingly, "I would be a farmer; but no, not, perhaps, if I were you. You could do other things; you could go into the world, you could do something great—"

"No, no," he said, shaking his head. "I? No, there is nothing great, nothing grand about me."

"How can you judge yourself?" said Margaret, with fine and flattering scorn; "it is other people that can judge best. No; if I were you, I would go away and paint and write, and be a great man; and then you could come home and visit the place where you used to live, and see your old friends; but just now I would go away. I would go to London, into the world. I would let people see what I could do—only first I would learn Margaret Leslie to draw," she said, with a little laugh; "that would be kind—for she never could find any one else to learn her about here."

"That would be the finest office of all," said Rob, inspired. "To go to London, every adventurer can do that; but to teach Miss Leslie is for few. I would rather have that privilege than—"

"Oh," cried Margaret, careless of the compliment, "and will you paint a picture, a great picture of Earl's-hall? I know we are poor. We are not great people, like the Bruces, or the Lindsays, or Sir Claude. We have not grand horses and carriages, and men in livery. That is just why I should like poor old mossy Earl's-hall to be in a bonnie picture, to make folks ask

where is that? what beautiful old house is that? You see," she added, laughing, "it is not just a beautiful house. It is not what you would call comfortable, perhaps. Jean and Grace, that is, my old sisters, Miss Leslie and Mrs. Bellingham, are never tired of abusing it. It is quite true that we have not got a thing that can be called a drawing-room—not a real drawing-room," she said, shaking her head. "You will wonder, but it is true. There is the long room, and there is the high room; the one papa sits in; and we dine in it, and he lives in it; and the other is empty, and full of—oh, everything you can think of! But there is no drawing-room, only the little West Chamber, such a little place. They say it was Lady Jean's room, and Lady Jean—is the only ghost we have."

"Is she the lady with the silk gown?"

"She is the Rustle," said Margaret, not disposed to treat the family ghost lightly. "You never see her, you only hear as if a grand lady walked by with her train sweeping. I think there is that very train in the old aumrie, as Bell calls it. But what I was saying was, because it is so old, Mr. Glen, because it's not grand, nor even comfortable—oh, I would like a bonnie picture, a real beautiful picture, of poor old Earl's-hall!"

"You must make one," he said.

"Yes, if I can; but you must make one first. You must take a big sheet of paper and draw it all out; I will show you the best view; and you must paint in every bit of it, the tower and the view from the tower (but, perhaps, after all, it would be difficult to put in the view, you must make another picture of that); and you must put it up in a beautiful frame, and write upon it 'Old Earl's-hall.' Oh! that will make Jean and Grace jump. They will say, 'Who can have done it? Earl's-hall—papa's place—that horrid, tumble-down old Scotch crow's-nest!' Margaret was a mimic, without knowing it, and mouthed this forth with the warmest relish in Mrs. Bellingham's very tone. But her own acting of her elder sister called forth lively indignation in the girl's warlike soul. "That's what they dare to call it," she cried, stopping to stamp her foot. "My Earl's-hall! But this is what you will do, Mr. Glen, if you want to please me. You will make a picture—not a common thing—a beautiful picture, that everybody will talk about; and send it to the biggest place in London, in the season when everybody is there, and hang it up for everybody to see."

"To please you," said Rob, "I would do a great deal—I would do—" he went on, sinking his voice, "as much as man can do." Margaret scarcely turned to him as he began to speak; but when his voice sank lower, her attention was caught. She raised her head with a little surprise, and, catching his eye, blushed: and paused, arrested, and wondering—What did he mean? Her frank girlish astonishment was very discomposing; he himself blushed and faltered, and stopped in the middle of his pretty speech—"as much as man can do!" but it was not so very much she asked him for. It seemed necessary to Margaret to say this to make things clear.

"Oh no," she said, with a shake of her head, "not that; though there are many men could not do what I want you to do, Mr. Glen; but you can do it easy—quite easy. What will I

want to begin with?" she added, changing the subject abruptly, and with true Scotch disregard for the difference between shall and will. This gentle indifference to his protestations chilled Rob a little. She had been so sweet and gracious to him that her demand upon his services only as something that he could do "easy, quite easy," brought him to a sudden stand-still. He did not know how to reply.

"It may not be much," he said; "but it will be all I can do. Miss Margaret, I will begin to-morrow, to show that I want to please you; and if it is not a good drawing it will not be my fault, nor for want of trying."

"I am sure it will be beautiful," she said. "Oh, I would like to see Grace and Jean jump when they see all the people, all the fine folk in London, running to look at old Earl's-hall."

Alas! Rob knew the great London people were not very likely to run in crowds to any performance of his. But the idea was delightful, however unlikely. He suffered himself to laugh, too, though he shook his head. He had never seen any one so sweet, so enchanting, or felt so near to being transported and carried out of himself as by this gracious little lady. Never before, he thought, had he known what such enthusiasm was. He had not forgotten Jeanie, and perhaps others. He was a connoisseur indeed in these soft emotions, the excitement of love-making, the pleasure of pursuit, the flattering consciousness of being admired and loved. All these sensations he knew well enough, not in any guilty way, except in so far as multiplicity of affections implied guilt; but this was not only something new, it was something altogether novel. Margaret had much of the great lady in her, simple as she was. She was not like his previous loves. Even in the little foolishnesses she said, there were signs of a wider world, of something more than even Rob himself, heretofore the oracle of his friends and sweethearts, was acquainted with. All the Fife gentry, all the rural aristocracy, all the great world, so fine at a distance, seemed to glide toward him half caressingly, half mocking, in that girlish figure. It gave him a new sensation. He was dazzled, enchanted, drawn out of himself. Who could tell what this new influence might effect in a young man avowedly "clever," whose abilities everybody had acknowledged? Love had inspired men who had no such eminence to start from. Love had made the blacksmith a painter; why should it not make Rob Glen a painter. To please her! she had put it on that ground. She was not like any of those he had trifled with before. Love had done wonders in all ages, and why not now—if perhaps this new sentiment, so mingled, yet so strange, so dazzling, so bewildering, might be Love.

"If that is what will please you best," he said, faltering a little with something which felt to him like real emotion, "then it shall be done, Miss Margaret, you must let me say so, if man can do it—I mean, if my skill can do it. But perhaps the two things can be done together. I will begin to-morrow, and you can watch me. I will tell you all I know, and you will see how I do it; that will be better, perhaps, than the straight lines."

"Oh, a great deal better," cried Margaret, fervently. "Come early; be sure you come

early, Mr. Glen. I will be ready. I will be waiting. I will let you see the best place for the view. And perhaps you would like to see the house? And then I will go with you, and stand by you, and hold your colors and your pencils, and watch the way you do it. Oh!" cried Margaret, putting her hands together, and breathing forth an earnest invocation of all the good spirits of the elements. "Oh, that it may only be a fine day!"

This very prayer brought home to them both the too plain suggestion conveyed by these gathering clouds, that it might not be a fine day, and chilled their very souls within them. If it should rain! "I think," said Rob, but timidly, "that it is looking better. The sky is cloudy here, but it's clear in the quarter where the wind is, and a north wind is seldom rainy. I think it will be a fine day."

"Do you think so, Mr. Glen?" Margaret looked up at him very wistfully, and then at the sky. Then she cleared up all at once, though the sky did not. "Any way," she said, "you will come? If it's wet, I could let you see the house. I think you would like to see the house. And bring a great many pictures and sketch-books to let papa see. Even if it is wet, it will be not so very bad," said Margaret, throwing a smile suddenly upon him like a light from a lantern. But then she recollected herself, and blushed wildly and grew serious—for he was a man and a stranger. Was he a stranger? No, she said to herself—and not even a gentleman, only Robert Glen. What fury would have been in poor Rob's heart had he known this last consoling sentiment which kept Margaret from feeling herself overbold. But she did not mean all the arrogance and impertinence that appeared in the thought. Not all of it, nor half of it. She meant no impertinence at all. She parted with him where the by-way came out upon the road, and went along the flowery hedge-row very demurely, thinking very kindly of Rob Glen. Margaret had not known before what it was to have a companion of her own age. Youth loves youth, all the more if youth has little experience of anything but age. Rob was a great deal more amusing (to Margaret) than Bell. This, perhaps, was a mistake, for Rob was not nearly so original as Bell was, nor so well worth knowing. But Margaret did not know that Bell was original. She knew all her stories, and was not too anxious to call forth that homely philosophy which so often (or so the girl thought) was subtly adapted for her own reproof and discouragement. Rob was a novelty to Margaret, even more than she was to him. The prospect of his visit made her feel that even a wet day would be endurable. He amused her more than any one had ever done before. And then she comforted herself that she could not be thought forward, or too bold, because, after all, he was not a gentleman or a stranger, but only Rob Glen!

Jeanie had got in before her young mistress, before the clouds had risen that threatened to cover the sky. What different thoughts were hers on the same subject! She listened to Margaret's voice talking to Bell, as she moved about putting everything in order for the night. What a sweet voice it was, Jeanie thought, speaking so softly, such bonnie English! no like us common

folk. The tones which were so wofully Fifeish to Sir Ludovic, and which made Mrs. Bellingham cry, seemed the very acme of refinement to Jeanie; and when a lady spoke to him so sweetly, looked at him with such lovely een, would it be wonderful if Rob forgot? And he was a gentleman himself, for what was it that made a gentleman but just education? and nobody could say but he had that. It gave Jeanie's heart a pang, but she was too just and candid not to see all this. How could he think of Jeanie Robertson with Miss Margaret for a friend? Jeanie went away into the depths of those low vaulted rooms, which formed the under-story of Earl's-hall in order to escape the sweet sound of Margaret's voice. Here there was a maze of rooms and cellars one within another, among which you might escape very easily from sounds without. You might escape, even, which was more difficult, from pursuers, even from persecutors, as had been known, it was said, in the old times; but, ah me, in the very deepest of recesses, how could poor Jeanie escape from herself?

Next day, next morning, Margaret looked at the sky long before any one was up at Earl's-hall. She looked out over the tree-tops to the sea, which swept round in a semicircle as far as the eye carried. From the Eden to the Tay the silvery line swept the horizon one dazzling curve of light. St. Andrews lay on her right hand, with all its towers and its ruins, and the glimmer of water beyond the headland on which it stood. Not a trace of smoke or human breath came from the brown old city, which stood there silent, with a homely majesty, in the profound stillness of the early morning. Not a human creature was awake between Margaret's window and the old town of St. Rule, except, indeed, in the fishing-boat, with its brown sail, out upon the dazzling line of sea, which was bearing slowly toward the bar after a night's fishing, with scarce wind enough to move it. The birds were all up and awake, but nothing else—not the ploughmen and laborers, so early was it, the sun still low over the sea. The girl's heart leaped at the beauty of the sight, but sank again so far as her own interests were concerned. Is it not a bad sign when it is so bright so early? And the light which thus lavished itself upon the world with none to see it, had a certain pale gleam which frightened the young observer, too much used to atmospheric effects not to know something about them. "Oh, what a lovely morning!" she said to herself; but even sanguine Margaret shook her head, thinking it doubtful if the day would be as fine. And oh, if she had but learned, if she could but make a picture of that old town upon the headland, lying voiceless in the morning light, with the great silver bow of the sea flashing round the vast horizon, all round to the vague shores of Forfarshire, and the dazzling breadth of Tay! If Rob were but here with his pencil and his colors! Margaret was in the enthusiast stage of ignorant faith, believing all things possible to Rob. He was to her the young Raphael, the Michael Angelo of the future. Or perhaps it would be better to say (but Margaret at that stage knew no difference) the Claude, the Turner of the new generation. She seemed to see all that scene transferred to canvas—nay, not even to canvas, to paper (but she knew no difference), dazzling,

shining with early dew and freshness, with the chirp of the birds in it, and the silence of nature, fixed there never to die. Poor Rob and his box of water-colors! He would himself, fortunately, at least when unintoxicated by the firmness of her faith in him, have had sense enough not to try.

But when the common world was awake, and when the working day had begun, the brilliancy did not last. First, mists crept over the sun, then the silver bow of the sea paled and whitened, the old brown tower turned gray, the blue sky disappeared. By eight o'clock everything was the hue of mud—sky, sea, and land together, with blurred shades of green and brown upon the last, but not an honest color; and lastly, it began to rain, softly, slowly, persistently, at first scarcely audible upon the leaves, then pattering with continuous sound, which filled all the air. Nothing but rain! The very air was rain, not disagreeable, not cruel, but constant.

"Well, it's aye good for the turnips," said Bell; "and I'll get my stocking done that's been so long in hand."

"And what do you say till the hay?" asked John, who was a pessimist, "and a' the low land about Eden in flood already."

But he, too, comforted himself by getting out the oldest plate, and giving it "a guid clean," which was an occupation he kept for this kind of weather; it is easier to endure a wet day when you are old than when you are young. Jeanie was less well off. When her work was done, she was not happy enough to take out the stocking, with which every woman in Fife is provided against a moment's leisure. To sit down tranquilly and turn the heel was not in Jeanie's power. She went up to her little turret room, and began to turn over her little possessions, and there found a keepsake or two from Rob, poor Jeanie! which filled her already dewy eyes with tears. But even that was an occupation, and Margaret, who had no occupation, was worst off of all. She flitted all over the house, up-stairs and down, sometimes disturbing Sir Ludovic with restless movements, taking down books and putting them up again, then flying down-stairs to warm her hands by the fire and tease the long-suffering Bell.

"Eh, Miss Margaret, if you would but try something to do! To see you aye coming and going makes my head gang round and round."

"How can you sit there with your stocking?" cried Margaret, "as if you were a part of the day? Will nothing happen—will nothing ever happen? Will it go on till dinner-time, and then till bed-time, and nobody come?"

"Wha would come, or what should happen?" said Bell, startled. It was a new idea to her that succor should come from without. "I ken nobody that is such a fool as to come out of their ain house on such a day. But, bless me! what is that?" And lo! in a moment as they listened, making Bell wonder and Margaret clap her hands, there came—blessed sound—a knock at the door!

CHAPTER XI.

"PAPA," cried Margaret, rushing in, her face bright with excitement and pleasure. Some one stood behind her on a lower step of the winding

stair. They filled up that narrow ascent altogether with their youth and the importance of their presence, and of all they had to say and do. She went in lightly, her eyes dancing, her light figure full of eagerness, a large portfolio in her hands. She had no doubt either that this advent of something to break the tedium would be agreeable to her father too, or that he must feel, as she did, the influence of the falling rain and heaviness of the monotonous sky. She went in, taking him amusement, variety, all that she would herself have rejoiced to see coming. It was the best of introductions, she felt, for the new-comer. As for Rob, he stood behind, ready to follow, with a little tremor in him, wondering how he would be received. He had never been in the company of any one so dignified as Sir Ludovic before, never had addressed a titled personage, upon terms of anything like equality; and this of itself was enough to make him nervous.

It seemed like an introduction into a new world to Rob. Then Sir Ludovic had the name of being a great scholar, a man of learning as well as a man of rank and position, and in every way above the range of a farmer's son; and, last of all, he was Margaret's father, and much might depend on the way in which he allowed the new visitor, who felt himself out of place at Earl's-hall, even while he felt himself "as good as" any one whom he might meet anywhere. Altogether it was an exciting moment. Rob was moved by the joyful welcome Margaret had given him, perhaps, to a higher idea of himself than he had ever entertained before. He had felt the flattery of it penetrate to his very heart. She had rushed out of the lower room, where she had been with Bell, almost meeting him at the door. She had spoken before he had time to say anything, exclaiming how glad she was to see him.

Rob had forgotten the rain. Notwithstanding that his mother had brought forth that very argument, bidding him "Go away with you; they would be glad to see you the day, if they never let you in again;" yet in the pleasure of being so received he had forgotten the very chiefest cause of his welcome. The brightened looks, the eager greeting, were too pleasant, too flattering, to be taken unmoved. It was not possible to believe that it was not for himself; and all these things had worked upon Rob to an extent he was scarcely aware of. He who had at first approached the young lady so respectfully, and with so little ulterior motive, and who had been half shocked, half amused at his mother's treatment of the renewed acquaintance between them, came almost with a bound to his mother's conclusion when he saw the brightness of Margaret's eyes this particular rainy morning. There could be no doubt that she was glad to see him; he was here by her own invitation. She was eager to associate him with herself in the interests of the old house, and anxious to accept the lessons he offered, and to "put herself under an obligation" to him in this way.

Margaret, entirely unacquainted with money and the value of things, never thought of any "obligation;" but he did, who was accustomed to consider the price of lessons, and to whom money's-worth would never be without importance. He was very willing, very anxious to confer this favor; but he could not help attach-

ing a certain significance to her acceptance of it, a significance entirely unjustified by any idea in Margaret's innocent mind. She was willing to accept the obligation; therefore, was it not at least permissible to think that some other way of clearing it, making up to him for his kindness, was in her mind? If she had any dawning thought of bestowing all she had upon him, of giving him herself and her money, her heiressship altogether, that would indeed be a very good reason for laying herself "under an obligation" to him. Thus Rob had come to think with a beating heart that there was meaning in the innocent girl's happy reception of him, in her eagerness to introduce him to her father, and warm desire that he should please him. And thus the moment was very serious to him, like nothing he had experienced before.

But Sir Ludovic did not stir. He had dropped asleep again, and did not wake even at his daughter's call. As he lay back in his chair, with his old ivory hands spread out upon its arms, and his white hair falling back, Rob thought he had never seen a more venerable appearance. If it were possible that things should so come about as that he should be familiar here, one of themselves, perhaps, calling this old man father (such things had been—and his mother thought were likely to be again—and what else could be the meaning in Margaret's eyes?), Rob felt that he would have reason to be proud. Even the very idea swelled his heart. The room, upon the threshold of which he stood, was unlike anything else he had seen before. He had been in wealthy Glasgow houses where luxury abounded—he had seen dwellings much more wealthy, costly, and splendid than Earl's-hall; but there was something in the aspect of the place, its gray noble stateliness outside, so poor, yet so dignified, its antique old-world grace within, the walls lined with books, the air of old establishment and duration that was in everything, which exercised the strongest influence over him. It was like a scene in a fairy tale—an old magician, and his fresh, fair young daughter, so liberal, so gentle, receiving him like a princess, opening wide the doors to him. He stood, as we have said, in a kind of enchantment. He was on the borders—was it of Paradise? certainly of some unknown country, more noble, more stately than anything he had known before.

This train of thought was interrupted by Margaret, who came back to him walking softly, and putting her finger to her lips. "Papa has fallen asleep again," she said, half annoyed, half anxious, and she pushed open softly the door of the little west chamber. "Here, come here!" she said, and went in before him, pointing to a chair and clearing Lady Jean's work and other obstacles with her own hands from the table. "Now let me see them," she cried. How eager she was, how full of interest and admiration! She spread the portfolio open before him which she had herself snatched from his hands and carried to her father. In it was the drawing of the Kirkton which his mother had suggested he should give "in a present" to Margaret. She was not aware yet of this happiness; but she was as simple as Mrs. Glen in ready admiration, and it seemed to her that nothing ever was more beautiful. "Oh!" she cried, struck dumb with wonder and delight. She said nothing more at

first, then suddenly burst into ecstasy. "Did you ever see it from the tower, Mr. Glen? Oh, it does not look like that, you are so high above it. But I know that look just as well; that might be from the wood. It would be in the morning when the dew was on the grass. It would be when everything was quiet, the men away to their work, the children in the school, the women in their houses—and the church standing against the sky: oh, how can you paint things that are not things?" cried Margaret—"the air, and the light, and the wind, and the shadows flying, and the clouds floating! Oh, how can you do it? how can you do it?"

Rob was carried away by this flood of delicious praise; he stood modest and blushing, deprecating, yet happy. He knew at the bottom of his heart that his drawing was not a poem like this, but only very ordinary water-color. He did not know what to say.

"You make me ashamed of my poor work. It ought to be a great deal better to deserve to be looked at all. The beauty is in your eyes," he said. But Margaret took no notice of this speech. She put that portfolio aside, and opened the other, and plunged into a world of amusement. These were his more finished works, the larger drawings which he had done from his sketches; and, indeed, Rob had spent a great deal of time and trouble upon them; they had occupied him when he was going through the squabbles and controversies of the last few months. They had been his refuge and shelter from a great deal of annoyance; and sometimes, when he looked at them, he had thought they might be worthy of exhibition, and perhaps might help to make his fortune—at least might open the door to him and put him in the way of making his fortune. But at other times he fell into gulfs of despair, and saw the truth, which was that they were only very tolerable studies of an amateur. He shook his head now while Margaret praised them. "Only daubs," he said, "only scratches. Ah, you should see real artist work. I am only an amateur."

"And so you ought to be," said Margaret. "An amateur means a lover, a true lover, doesn't it? I mean of pictures, you know," she added, with her usual blush. "And if you do anything for love, it is sure to be better than what you do for—any other reason—for money. Could anybody paint a real beautiful picture for money? No," cried the daring young theorist, "it must be for love."

"I think so too," said Rob. He reddened also, but with more conscious sentiment. "I think so too! and if I paint Earl's-hall, it will be so."

"Will you?" said Margaret, grateful and happy. Love of her was not what the girl was thinking of; nothing was farther from her mind, nor did it ever occur to her that the word had other meanings than that she gave it. Then she pushed the portfolio away from her, and changed the subject in a moment. "You cannot begin to make the picture, Mr. Glen; what shall we do now? Will I show you the house?" said Margaret, with her Scotch imperfection of grammar, "or will you begin me with the straight lines, or will you (that would be the best) draw something and let me watch. Draw papa! I will open the door, look, like this; and he never stirs, I know

he will never stir for an hour at a time. Oh, that is the thing I should like you to do. Draw papa!"

Her voice sank into a softer cadence, not to disturb Sir Ludovic; but her face was more eager than ever. She put the door open, showing like a picture the other room within: the background of books in many tones of subdued color, with gleams of old gilding, giving a russet edge of light here and there. In the midst of the scene thus disclosed sat Sir Ludovic, his head, with its silver locks, leaning back upon his high chair.

"I cannot draw the figure," Rob had said, with anxiety and alarm, feeling the task too much for him; but, after all, when he looked again there was not much of the figure visible. The wide old velvet coat was folded over the old student-sleepers' knees; only his cheek was visible, still perfect in its fine oval, and the outline of his noble head against the dark leather of the chair. It was a study of still life, not a portrait, that was wanted. Rob looked at the "subject" thus proposed to him, and Margaret looked at him with great anxiety, to see in his face what he was going to do. Would he consent? Would he refuse to her this thing, which, now that she had proposed it, she felt that she wanted more than anything else in the world? Recklessly Margaret threw herself "under obligations" to the young man.

"Oh, if you please, do it!" she cried, in a half whisper, putting her two pretty hands together in a pretty, spontaneous gesture of supplication. How could Rob resist, whose first desire was to please her, and to whom in pleasing her so many soft brightnesses of pleasure to himself opened up? Even without that motive, to do him justice, he would have been melted by her entreaty—he would have been proud to do anything for her.

"I don't think I can do it; but if it will please you, Miss Margaret, I will try."

"Oh, I know you can do it," Margaret cried. "Oh, tell me what to bring for you—water? You have left your big book down-stairs, but I will run and fetch it, and the pencils, and—"

"Miss Margaret, I cannot let you wait upon me."

"Oh, but I will, though; I like it. Fancy! when you are going to paint papa for me," cried Margaret, flying down-stairs. She came up again, breathless, laughing and glowing, before he could think what was the right thing to do. "There it is," she said, putting down the sketching-block before him, "and I will bring the water in a moment. You are not to stir. Oh, Mr. Glen, think what it will be to have a picture of papa!"

"But I cannot, indeed, make a picture of him. I cannot draw the figure; it is quite difficult. I am not so clever as you think," cried Rob, with sudden fright. Margaret, carried away by the flutter of haste and pleasure, and half-childish familiar acquaintance, put up her hand as if to stop his mouth.

What wonder if Rob almost forgot himself. He half put out his hand to take hers, and he raised his eyes to hers with a look which somehow stopped the girl. She did not understand it, but it frightened her. She drew a little farther away, and her usual blush rushed over her face in a flood of color. "That will be the best

place to sit," she said, half abashed, she could not tell why. And Rob remembered himself, and took his place as she indicated. She stood by him, the most eager, watchful attendant. When she had got everything he could want, she put herself behind him, watching over his shoulder every line he drew. This was bad for the drawing; but it was wonderfully enchanting and inspiring for the young man thus elevated into an artist, a genius, a creator. He felt her hand upon his chair, he felt her breath as she bent over him, a kind of perfumed atmosphere of her enveloped him. Her eagerness grew as lines began to come on the paper, he hardly knew how, her voice ran on close by his ear with exclamations and broken notes of soft, subdued sound, half a whisper, half a cry. "Oh, is that how you begin?" Margaret cried; "me, I would have thought the chair first. Oh! that is his face and the line of the hair—yes; but what do you make that dot for in the middle? there is no spot there."

"You know we must measure the lines, and see that one is in proportion with the other," said Rob, holding up his pencil as a level; "it would not do to make one part larger than the other. I might take all my paper for one arm if I did not measure; and that is what beginners often do."

"Oh!" said Margaret. She watched him with her head a little on one side, her lips just parted with eagerness and interest, her brown eyes all aglow. Sometimes her hand would touch his shoulder as she leaned more and more over him; her breath moved the hair on his temples, and went through and through the young man. And he was very open to this kind of influence. It did not require any mercenary hopes, any dazzling realization of an heiress, to send him into all the seductive beguilements of the love-dream. Jeannie had done it with her simple rural attractions—how much more her young mistress, with a whole romance about her, and so many charms, both visionary and real!

Rob was not a fortune-hunter, bent on an heiress. This was what his mother would have had him to be; but his nature was too susceptible for such a cold-blooded pursuit. He did what was far better, infinitely more likely to succeed, a greater stroke of genius than any skill of fortune-hunting—he fell simply over head and ears in love. He had done it before many times; it was not the intense and real passion which now and then carries a man out of himself, the love that has no room in its heart for more than one image. But still it was what he knew as that sentiment; and it was quite genuine. A little mist came into Rob's eyes, through which he saw Sir Ludovic in his chair, the task he had set before him; his heart beat in his ears, a soft confusion and excitement seized him. He did not know what he was doing, as he sat there with Margaret looking over his shoulder. His experiences before of this same kind had been pleasant enough, but none of them had possessed the charm, the sweetness of this. Not only was she more charming than any of his former loves, but he himself was vaguely raised and elevated as to another sphere of being. In the dazzlement and tremor of the new crisis, the gratification of his vanity and self-regard, he seemed to himself only now to have attained his true sphere.

"Oh, how wonderful it is!" said Margaret;

"two or three strokes with a lead-pencil, and there is papa! This is more wonderful than the views. Now his hand, Mr. Glen. How sleeping it is on the chair! You could tell he was sleeping only from the look of his hand. Hasn't he a beautiful hand? I never saw one like it. My sister Jean's is white, with dimples in it; they say she has a pretty hand; but then she has so many rings, and she never forgets them. But papa's hand is beautiful, I think. Did you ever see one so fine? It has bones in it, but Jean's has no bones. It is like himself in little. Don't you think so, Mr. Glen?"

"You forget how little I know Sir Ludovic. I have not seen him since I was a boy. But very often the hand is like the owner of it, in little, as you say. Your own is, I have noticed that."

"Mine?" Margaret raised the hand referred to, and looked at it, then laughed softly. "Mine is a brown thin thing, all fingers."

"May I stop to look at it?" said Rob.

She laughed still more, and blushed, and held it out with a little tremor.

"It is nothing to look at—unless you know about the lines or can tell any one's fortune. Can you tell any one's fortune by their hand, Mr. Glen? Mine is as brown as a toad, and not soft and round like Jean's, nor like papa's. Oh, there is nothing to look at in my hand. It is so brown. I think shame when I see a lady's; but then I always lose my gloves, or at least one of them," said Margaret, half penitent, half laughing. While this dialogue was going on, a change had begun; Sir Ludovic had not stirred when she went to call him, but the subdued sound of the voices, and that sense of being looked at which is so sure a spell against sleep, began at last to affect him; he stirred slightly, then made a little change of position; then he said, drowsily, "Little Peggy! are you there, my little girl?"

She sprang away from Rob in a moment, leaving him somehow dazzled, disappointed, and impoverished, he could scarcely tell how. He would have caught at her dress to detain her, but dared not. He tried one whisper, however, very earnest and urgent.

"Stay, stay, Miss Margaret! He must not move till I have done. Do not answer, and he will doze again."

She only shook her head in reply, and went to her father's side lightly and rapidly like a bird.

"Yes," she said, "I am here, papa; but keep still, you are not to move;" and she put her arms round him, standing behind, her pretty hands—still pretty, though they were brown—upon his breast. "Now, quick, quick, Mr. Glen," she cried, not thinking how she had changed the group and the entire sentiment of the scene. All at once it became dramatic, and utterly beyond Rob, who had no gifts that way. He sat for a few moments vaguely gazing at her, lost in admiration and pleasure; but he shook his head. He could do no more.

"Eh, my Peggy? what has happened?" said Sir Ludovic, faintly struggling to wake himself. "Not to—move?—why am I not to move? I am—living, I think, still."

"He is drawing you, papa. Oh, you will spoil it—you will spoil my picture!" cried Margaret. She took away her arms from his shoulders, provoked and ready to cry. "If you only

would have stayed still two minutes longer—oh, papa! and if you only would have been quick—quick, Mr. Glen! But now my picture's all spoiled," cried the girl.

Sir Ludovic came to himself in a moment at the name.

"Where is your—Mr. Glen?" he said, and sat upright and looked round. Then Rob rose, very much embarrassed, and came forward slowly, feeling more and more awkward. He felt like a country lout when he was in presence of this fine old gentleman. He did not seem able even to walk as he ought with Sir Ludovic's eyes upon him, and grew very red and very uncomfortable; he had not so much as a hat to occupy his uncultivated hands, and all his self-possession and powers of speech seemed to go from him. Margaret, too, now that the moment had come, felt a little afraid.

"We came while you were sleeping, papa," she said, unconscious that she was thus identifying herself with her visitor; "and as it was wet, and nothing else was to be done, and you were sleeping, and I could not disturb you, I asked Mr. Glen to draw you; and he has been making a beautiful picture—just you, your very self, in your big chair—when you wakened. Why did you waken just at that moment to stop Mr. Glen's beautiful picture, papa?"

CHAPTER XII.

SIR LUDOVIC was not quite sure that he liked the sudden interposition between his child and himself of this Rob Glen. He half forgot the permission he had given that Rob Glen might come and teach drawing to Margaret—that was how he put it to himself. He was altogether cross and annoyed by the circumstances generally. The name of Rob Glen, and the description of him as Mrs. Glen's son at Earl's-lee, had sounded quite innocent, but the apparition of a good-looking young man had quite a different effect upon Sir Ludovic. Perhaps he did not look altogether a gentleman, but then he looked quite as much a gentleman as various Fife potentates whom Sir Ludovic readily recalled to mind, and whose claims to gentility were unquestionable. For that matter, young Fallow of Greenshaw, with the best blood of the county in his veins, looked a much greater lout than Rob Glen; so that was no safeguard. And then he was half, or more than half, affronted by the advantage they had taken of his doze. It might be Margaret's fault, but then he had no desire to blame his Peggy, and a great desire to find the young fellow pushing and disagreeable. He ought not to have permitted himself to take such a liberty as to make a drawing of a gentleman when he was asleep, notwithstanding any request that a foolish girl might make to him.

By-and-by Sir Ludovic was mollified toward Margaret by her delight in having what she called "a picture" of him at any cost, and he would not forbid that it should be finished sometime or other; but he did not for that fully forgive the artist, nor, indeed, did it make much difference that it was really a clever drawing, slight as it was. He was determined to give no further facilities for its completion—not to fall

asleep again when Rob Glen was in the way. Perhaps if Sir Ludovic had wanted amusement as much as his daughter did, Rob and his portfolios would have afforded him so much relief on this wet day as to earn forgiveness; but unfortunately Sir Ludovic did not care for the rain. He was not depressed by it, nor were his other occupations interfered with. Rain or shine, he sat in the same chair and read over the same books, of which he was never tired. And what was a new little event to him? if it were innocent, only a bore and interruption, and if it were not innocent, an annoyance and trouble.

Margaret would have been grateful to anybody—a peddler, if no better could be had; but Sir Ludovic felt no want, and therefore knew no gratitude. He was civil. He looked at the portfolios and gave to their contents a faint praise. He did not deny that the outline of himself, just put in to be finished another time, was a clever drawing; but at the same time he made Margaret a little sign with his eyebrows to take the young man away. And though Sir Ludovic had been startled into alarm on Margaret's account at the sight of Rob Glen, it did not occur to him that he was increasing all the dangers by thus requiring of her that she should get him away. He threw his child farther and more intimately into the young man's society, though he felt it was not society for her; but what then? he was too fine a gentleman to be rude even to the farmer's son, but was he to take the trouble to talk to him, making conversation for a youth who did not amuse him, who bored him, who kept him from his books? This was a thing which Sir Ludovic did not understand. He gave Margaret that silent intimation of his will, and he opened his book, which was another hint to the intruder. If the young man would take the hint and go, so much the better—if not, then for this once it was better that Margaret should entertain him, and leave her father in peace.

"Perhaps we might go on with our lesson now, Mr. Glen," said Margaret, with one of her sudden suffusions of color. There was some meaning in it this time, for she felt that her father was wanting in courtesy, and was terrified lest Mr. Glen should think he was cavalierly treated. She took up the great portfolio herself to carry it away, and would not let Rob take it from her.

"Why should not I carry it?" she said. "You came to give us pleasure, not to please yourself, Mr. Glen—and of course I will carry the book. It is not at all heavy," she said, lugging it along. Perhaps she intended to convince Sir Ludovic of his own indifference to his visitor and failure in the politeness necessary; and some idea of this kind did cross the old man's mind, but too lightly to make the impression his daughter intended. It was not much to him to see her carrying big books, and he was glad to get rid of the visitor. He drew a long breath of relief when the young pair disappeared in the West Chamber. He could not be troubled with Rob Glen. He had been civil enough. Sir Ludovic was not capable of being uncivil under his own roof; but why should he take more trouble? As for Margaret, the idea of any danger to her, or impropriety in this companionship for her, died out of his mind when

put in comparison with his risk of being disturbed in his own person. He was glad to get rid of the two. Had Margaret even been alone, he would have said, "Run away, my little Peggy, run and play," in those habitual words which wounded Margaret's pride of young womanhood so much. He opened his book, and set it straight before him, and placed himself at a more comfortable angle: and then—his eyelids began to come together once more, his head drooped on his breast, then settled on the back of his chair.

It was afternoon, and all was drowsy and still; very still was the long room, now those younger creatures were gone. The rain streamed down outside with a soft, continuous patter upon the trees. The skies were all gray, the earth all silent. The faintest hum, no more than might come from a beehive, might sometimes be audible from the West Chamber, but the walls were thick and the doors fitted closely. If he heard the voices at all, they fell into the subdued patter of the rain, the general stillness. Afternoon—and seventy-five. What reason had he to keep himself awake, to insist upon living instead of sleeping through that heavy, silent, drowsy afternoon? And yet he did not like to think he had been sleeping. When John came in behind the screen and began to prepare for dinner, Sir Ludovic sat upright with very wide-open eyes. He was always erect, but now he sat bolt-upright in his chair.

"Is that you, John?" he said, with unusual snavity, so that the old man might entertain no doubt of his perfectly wide-awake condition.

"Ay, it's just me, Sir Ludovic," said John. No one could have been more indifferent on this subject than John was. He knew very well that his master was apt to doze the afternoon through—but what of that? It was a privilege of his position, not a misfortune. Old John would gladly have dozed too, and found it entirely natural. He himself took a nap whenever he could get it, and though he would cling with natural vehemence to the fact that he had "not slept a wink," there was neither shame nor annoyance in his mind at being caught in the act. The signs of old age were not alarming nor troublesome to John; he had a distinct pleasure in perceiving them in his master, and no objection to put them forth for himself, to boast a little of what he still could do "at my age," and to claim all manner of little exemptions on this score. The old master sat up very erect in his chair, with a great pretence of interest and absorption in his book, to cheat the other's observations, but the old servant was not to be cheated. He said to himself quite calmly, and to Bell when he went down-stairs, "Sir Ludovic's getting an auld man."

"No so much aulder than yoursel'," Bell retorted, promptly.

"Was I saying he was much aulder than myself? He's nearer ten years than five—and that makes a great difference; but you women are aye for comparisons," said John. "I said he was getting an auld man."

How differently the same sentiment mingled with the great stillness in the long room! Sir Ludovic did not want any change; he was well enough, willing to last just as he was, hoping nothing different, satisfied if he could only go on

so. But here, creeping about him, irresistible, not even to be kept at arm's-length or regarded as something outside of himself, were the symptoms of change coming. How erect he sat, how wide-awake he forced himself to look! he would not own to the weakness, and perhaps, who could tell, by mere ignoring, might vanish—or, at least, appear to vanish. But it was not to be forgotten, nor even resisted very effectively. Even John's movements, the passing of himself or his shadow across the light, the sound of his heavy old leisurely footsteps, the slight clang of the silver and tinkle of the glass as it was put on the table, began to take a certain rhythm, and to lull the listener once more. "There must be something the matter with me," Sir Ludovic said, as he roused himself once more with an effort, and got up to shake himself free, by movement, from the spell. Movement, that must be what he wanted—a little exercise, which he was aware he had neglected sadly. But now, perhaps, it might be of use. He had to go to prepare for dinner, which was always of use in charming the drowsiness away.

Margaret came in a few minutes after with a little flutter and rustle of roused life about her, which was very different from the slumbrous atmosphere of old age, in which Sir Ludovic had discovered himself to be sinking. She was very eager, and at the same time doubtful, as to what he would say to her; he had not found her visitor so delightful as she had done, she felt. To Margaret the afternoon had been full of pleasure. The wet day, which in the morning had filled her with despair, had become more attractive than the finest of weather: Rob's society, the novelty of talking to him, of pouring forth her own ideas upon subjects with which Bell, for instance, had little sympathy, and of hearing from him a great deal which, if not very new in itself, was profoundly intellectual, brilliantly original to the little country girl—had transported Margaret. How clever he was, how well he could talk! She had never met with anybody like him. What worlds of books he had read! not, perhaps, such learned books (but of this she was not quite sure) as papa. But then papa did not talk of them; and Mr. Glen was so willing to talk of them, mingling his own impressions and ideas with hers, quoting his favorite poets and leading Margaret herself, shyly, with glowing eyes and flaming cheeks, to quote hers, and "say" verses out loud which she had said to herself with all the sweet enthusiasm of youth in many a solitary place, but had never found anybody to care for. Even Jeanie, Jeanie who was young, and full of natural poetry too, when Margaret had tried to "say" her beloved "pieces" to her, had dropped asleep, which had been one of the girl's great disappointments in life.

When she was younger, Bell, indeed, had listened with great complacency to these "pieces," as proving how clever the child was; but from that time to this, when she suddenly found that Rob Glen knew them too, and would say half, asking if she remembered the next—most delightful of suggestions—she had found nobody who cared, nobody who would listen and respond. Margaret's eyes grew brighter and brighter, the ready flush of feeling went and came over her face like the flying shadows on a sunshiny landscape, as quick as those shadows fly upon the

hills; and a soft excitement got possession of her. She talked as she had never talked in her life before, and impressed him as he impressed her by that easy poetry of youth which can look almost like genius in its early outpouring. A mutual admiration, a mutual interest, thus sprang up between them: and how much your admiration of the superiority of another is increased by the certainty that the other shows his superiority by admiring *you*, who can doubt? Rob, too, felt all this. He was dazzled himself by the pretty, simple strains of thinking and feeling which Margaret showed unawares, and he dazzled her (wittingly and of purpose) by his own eloquence, his theories, his deep thoughts, his lofty fancies. How delightful it all was, and how the hours of wetness out-of-doors, of slow-falling rain, and heavy clouds, and drippings and patterings and overflows, tedious to everybody else, flew over the two young people in the little panelled room!

The drawing-lesson was not so happy; spite of all the master's efforts, it had been impossible to get Margaret's wavering pencil to execute the necessary straight line. This had been humbling; but it had been partially sweetened by Rob's assurance that many who could not overcome such a commonplace difficulty became excellent in color, and in a sense of the harmonies of Nature. What a lovely phrase this was, "the harmonies of Nature!" Margaret felt instinctively that she would understand them, though she could not make a straight line. Then she took him over the house, showing him "the high room," which was over the long room, the vaulted gallery with its tapestries, which filled him with wonder and admiration. Neither of them perceived another figure, which retreated before them, getting out of their way as they lingered at every point of interest, and which was poor Jeanie, who finally took refuge behind the tapestry, with a forlorn wish to see and hear again the faithless "friend" who had forgotten her. The two stood close to that tapestry for some time, he talking, smiling upon the young lady, giving her a great deal of information (of dubious accuracy) about tapestry and art manufactures, while Jeanie, in great terror of discovery, and still greater shame and horror of herself for so mean an action as "listening," lurked behind, scarlet with anxiety, confusion, and wretchedness. Jeanie, however, it is needless to deny, was a little comforted by what she heard.

Courtship goes quickly on the lower levels of society, and how Rob should occupy the time in talking of the old hangings which were just "an awful place for dust," if he really wished to make himself agreeable to Miss Margaret, Jeanie could not understand. "No a word but that the hale world might hear," she said to herself, puzzled but soothed, as she escaped to her little room in the top of the turret, after the others had gone away. She could hear their voices, with little breaks of laughter still going on, as they went down-stairs—the same sound which was as the humming of bees to Sir Ludovic in his great chair. Not so, Jeanie knew, had Rob made his advances to herself. These approaches were much less abstract, far more rapid. Perhaps "he wasna meaning anything," perhaps it was but a polite visit, for abstract reasons, occupied by abstract subjects. This thought consoled Jeanie, and made her heart swell with a secret

pride in Rob's education and capability to hold his place with the best.

But, after all this, Margaret, it may be supposed, did not present herself quite so calmly as usual at the dinner-table. She had a little rose-tint, which was very seldom permanent, upon her pretty cheek, and her eyes glowed with unusual brightness. She was more resigned than usual to the ceremony of being handed to her seat, and did not think the two old men were making a fool of her, as she was apt to do; and she did not say anything, but awaited her father's questioning with much suppressed excitement. Sir Ludovic for some time disappointed her by saying nothing on the subject—which, when you expect to be questioned, and, indeed, to be found fault with, and stand on the defensive, is the most trying of all treatment. However, after a time, Margaret's pulses woke again to liveliest beating.

"Did your artist stay long, my Peggy?" she heard Sir Ludovic saying, without any warning at all.

"Oh! n-not very long, papa," said Margaret, slightly faltering. Then—for she suddenly remembered that John, who knew everything that went on, did by no means hesitate to contradict her when he thought proper—she added, hastily, "But first he learned me to draw."

"That was very clever of him," said Sir Ludovic; "and did you learn, as you say, to draw—all in one lesson, my little Peggy? That was very clever of you, too."

"Why should you always make a fool of me?" said Margaret, pathetically. "You know I did not mean that, papa. But we tried; and then I let him see the house, and the high room, and the tapestry. We could not go up to the tower, because it was raining. He is to come another day," said Margaret, with the extreme of simple candor, "to see the view from the tower. And he thought the tapestry was very fine, papa."

"Did he, my little Peggy? Then I fear he cannot know very much about it," said Sir Ludovic. "He is rather a clumsy imitation of a hero, very rustic and Fifish, your Mr. Glen."

"You call *me* Fifish too," said Margaret, with a little laugh which expressed a good deal of irritation. The finest and most significant satire was implied in Margaret's tone. "If *me*, then anybody!" it seemed to say, with a mixture of wounded pride and sense of absurdity. Sir Ludovic forgot the moral he had meant to draw in his amusement. He laughed, with that tender laugh which is called from us by the dear follies of our children.

"Did I call you Fifish too, my Peggy?—which shows I am a very ignorant, ridiculous old man. But he should not have begun that drawing of your old father while I—dozed. It is not often I doze," said Sir Ludovic, with the same uneasy feeling which Margaret had felt, that old John behind his chair was quite capable of contradicting him; "and if he had been a gentleman, I don't think he would have done it."

"Oh!" cried Margaret, clasping her hands, "it was all my fault—I assure you it was all my fault, papa."

"Well, my little girl; but a gentleman would not have done it. He would not have taken an advantage of a man he did not know. Friends

may do that kind of thing, but not a stranger, my little Peggy."

"Oh, papa!" cried Margaret, the tears coming to her eyes, "why will you always blame other people for what was my fault? He did not want to do it (this was a fib, but perhaps a pardonable one); it was me that wanted it, papa; and when I said to him, 'Oh, Mr. Glen, I have not got any picture of papa, not even a poor photograph—oh, draw me a picture of papa!' he did it; but it was me that wanted it—and how could he refuse me?"

"He would have been a brute if he had," said the old man, melted; "but still it is true, my Peggy, your stranger should not have done that, without my knowledge, the first time he ever saw me."

"As if he had not known you all his life!" cried Margaret. "He knew you as well as I did when we were little—when you used to walk about. He wondered why you never walked about now; he asked me if you were ill, and I told him you were not ill, only—"

"Only what, my little girl?—old and useless?" said Sir Ludovic, with a pathetic undertone of protest, yet acquiescence, a wistful desire to be contradicted in his faltering voice.

"No—oh, I beg your pardon, papa. I did not mean to be so—impudent. It sounds so, but I did not mean it. I said you were only—lazy."

Sir Ludovic laughed. What relief was in the laugh! what ease from the pang which had struck him! His little girl, at least, did not see the true state of affairs, and why should he not be able to look at this, at least, through her eyes?

"Perhaps there is some truth in it," he said. "You were always saucy, my Peggy. If I were not so lazy, but moved about a little more, it might be better for me. What have you to say against that?" he cried, turning round half angrily to old John, who had given a significant "Humph!" behind his chair.

"Oh, just nothing at all, Sir Ludovic. I was na speaking. But exercise is good for man and beast—when they're no ower auld or ower frail."

Sir Ludovic laughed again, though less pleasantly.

"I will defy the cleverest talker in the world," he cried, "old John, you old grumbler, to make anything of you."

"I just aye say what I think, Sir Ludovic," said the old man, without a smile; but he chuckled when he went down-stairs and recounted the incident to Bell. "Would he hev me say he was as souple as a laud o' twenty?" said old John.

"Ye auld grumbler, as Sir Ludovic weel says. What for could you no say a pleasant word to pleasure the maister?" cried the more sympathetic Bell.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR LUDOVIC was reading a book which was of the greatest interest to him, connected with a branch of study in which he was strong, and in which he himself meant to leave his mark for other students; but he could not fix his attention to it. Was it that he was drowsy again this fresh morning? The rain and all the clouds

had cleared away. The whole earth was freshened and sweetened by the deluge of the previous day, and everything was rejoicing in the return of the sun. The birds chirped more loudly than usual, and a playful little wind, a kind of baby-breeze, an elemental urchin, full of fun and mischief, was in the wood, shaking the trees, and sending showers of glittering drops at any moment upon the soaked and humid soil. The fragrance of the grass, and "goodly smell" of the turned-up rich brown earth, that genial mother soil out of which was not man made, and unto which he goes back when the world is done with him? was in the air. Summer is so wide in her common blessings; for everybody something; to those who have, the joyful fruits of the earth, to those who have not, at least this goodly smell.

The window was open; the wind came in fresh and sweet, ruffling such papers as it could find about, and singing airy songs to Margaret as she went and came. But it was an air of a different kind that it breathed about Sir Ludovic in his chair. Drowsy?—no, he was not drowsy, in the softness of the morning, but his mind was full of thoughts which were not cheerful. He had lived for so long a time in one steady, endless, unchanging routine, that it had seemed as if it never would end. The more active pleasures and toils of life must end, it is certain; but why should the gentle routine of a recluse life ever be disturbed? Five years ago, when he had been seventy, thoughts of the age he had attained and the crisis he had reached had been in his mind. The full score of years had been accomplished, and what reason had he to expect that they should be prolonged! But they had been prolonged, and the old man had been lulled into absolute calm. He had good health; nothing except

"Those locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size,"

to remind him how near he must be to the end. He had risen up cheerfully in the morning, and gone to bed cheerfully at night; and what was to hinder that it should be so forever? But now all at once the old man seemed to hear the messenger knocking at the door. He was knocking very softly as yet, only a confused, faint tapping, which might be some chance passer-by, and not the emissary of the Great King—tapping very softly, and the door had not yet been opened to him; but how if it was he? This was the thought that assailed Sir Ludovic with something like the same fretting, disturbing influence as actual knocking at the old door, faintly persistent, though never violent, might have had. He was impatient of it, but he had not been able to get rid of it. After all, it was not wonderful that an old man should get tired and be drowsy in the afternoon. He had not for a long time acknowledged to himself that this was the case; but lately it had been difficult to deny it, and the little event of yesterday had forced it, with a deepened touch of the disagreeable, on his notice.

Rob Glen's sketch, though it was so slight, had conveyed a stronger impression to his own mind of his own agedness and feebleness than all his other experiences of himself. The old figure reclining back in the easy-chair, thin, with meagre limbs following the angles of the chair,

and languid, helpless hands stretched out upon its supports: the sight of it had given Sir Ludovic a shock. He had been partially soothed afterward by the natural desire of Margaret to have "a picture" of him, as she said. "Not like the grand gentleman over the mantel-piece," the girl had said, "but in your chair, sitting there with your book, as you have always, always been to me." This "always, always," had been a comfort to him. It had breathed the very essence of that continuance which had seemed to become the one quality of life that mattered much; but notwithstanding Margaret's "always," the sketch had given him a shock. He thought of it again this morning as he sat in the same spot and felt now and then the soft puff of the fresh summer air. Was it, perhaps, that even Margaret, his little Peggy, was already conscious of that "afterward," when it would be something for her to have even so slight a sketch of her father? That bit of paper would last longer than he should. When his chair had been set back against the wall, and his books all dispersed to the ends of the earth, how well he could fancy his little girl taking it out, crying, perhaps—then smiling, saying, "This is the one I like best of poor papa; that was how he used to be at the last." She would cry at first, poor little girl—it would make a great difference to his little Peggy; but after a while she would smile, and be able to tell how like it was to poor papa.

So vivid was this imagination that Sir Ludovic almost seemed to see and hear already all that he imagined; and the fancy gave him no pang. It was only part of a confused discomfort of which he could not get rid. This is so different from most of our disquietudes. In other matters it is almost certain that the future which alarms us will come with a difference at least. Our apprehensions will change, if no more, and we will be able to persuade ourselves either that the evil we fear may not come, or that it will not be so great an evil as we thought. But the case is otherwise when it is death that is coming, whether to another or to ourselves. That is the one thing which is not to be got rid of. Poor human nature, so shifty, so clever at eluding its burdens, so sanguine that to-morrow will not be as to-day, is brought to a stand before this one approach which cannot be eluded. No use attempting to escape from this, to say that something unforeseen may happen, that things may turn out better. Better or worse than we think, it may be; but there is no eluding it. Sir Ludovic could not steal past on one side or the other to avoid the sight of Him who was approaching. This was the inevitable in actual presence. If not to-day, then to-morrow, next day; in any case, coming always nearer and more near.

These thoughts had been forced upon him by the progress of events, chiefly by that drowsiness which he did not like, but could not ignore nor yet resist. Why should he be so ready to sleep? it had never been his way; and the thoughts it roused within him now, when it had forced itself on his attention, were very confusing. He was rather religious than otherwise, not a man of profane mind. True, he had not of late, in the languor that had crept over him, been very regular in his attendance at church; but he was not undevout—rather, on the whole,

disposed toward pious observances; and without going into any minuteness of faith, a sound believer. The effect of these new thoughts upon him in this respect was strange. He said to himself that it was his duty to think of his latter end, to consider the things that concerned his peace before they were forever bid from his eyes. Anyhow, even if he was not going to die, this would be right. To think of his latter end, to consider the things that concerned his everlasting peace. Yes, yes, this was, there could be no doubt, the right thing as well as the most expedient; but as soon as he had repeated this suggestion to himself, the most trivial fancy would seize upon him, the merest nothing would take possession of his mind, till, with a little start as of awaking, he would come back to the recollection that he had something else to do with his thoughts, that he must consider his latter end. So easy it was to conclude that much, if that would do—but so difficult to go farther! And all was so strange before him, far more confusing than the thought of any other change in life. To go to India, to go to China, would be troublesome for an old man—if such a thing had been suggested to him, no doubt he would have said that he would much prefer to die quietly at home—yet dying quietly, when you come to think of it, is far more bewildering than going to China. It was not that he felt afraid; judgment was not the thing that appalled him.

No doubt there were many things in his life that he might have done better, that he would gladly have altered altogether, but these were not the things that oppressed him. Nothing could be farther from the old man's mind than that thought of "an angry God" which is supposed in so much simple-minded theology to be the great terror of death. It was not an angry God that Sir Ludovic feared. He had that sort of dumb confidence in God which perhaps would not satisfy any stern religionist, but which is more like the sentiment of the relation which God himself has chosen to express his position toward men than any other—a kind of unquestioning certainty that what God would do with him would be the right thing, the most just, the most kind; but then he had no notion what kind of thing that would be, which made it very confusing, very depressing to him.

An old man, by the time he has got to be seventy-five, has given over theorizing about life; he has no longer courage enough to confront the unknown—quiet continuance, without any break or interruption, is the thing that seems best for him; but here was an ending about to come, a breaking off—and only the unknown beyond; and no escaping from it, no staving it off, no postponement. All so familiar here, so natural, the well-known chair, the old cosy coat: and beyond—what? he could not tell what: an end; that was all that was certain and clear. He believed everything that a Christian should believe, not to say such primary principles as the immortality of the soul; but imagination was no longer lively nor hope strong in the old man, and what he believed had not much to do with what he felt. This was not an elevated state of mind, but it was true enough. He himself felt guilty, that he could not realize something better, that he could not rise to some height of contemplation which would make him glad of his removal into realms

above. This was how he ought to think of it, ought to realize it, he knew.

But he could not be clear of anything except the stop which was coming. To sit in his old chair with his old book, the fresh morning air breathing in upon him, his little girl coming and going, these were not much to have, of all the good things of which the world is full; but they were enough for him. And to think that one of these mornings he should no longer be there, the chair pushed away against the wall, the books packed up on its shelf, or worse, sent off to some dusty auction-room to be sold; and himself—himself: where would old Sir Ludovic be? shivering, unclothed in some unknown being, perhaps seeing wistfully, unable to help it, the dismantling of everything here, and his little girl crying in a corner, but unable to console her. He knew he ought to be thinking of high spiritual communion, of the music of the spheres. But he could not; even of his little Peggy crying for her old father and missing him, he did not think much: but most of the dull, strange fact that he would be gone away, a thing so strange and yet so certain that it gave him a vertigo and bewildering giddiness—and sometimes, too, a kind of dreary impatience, a desire to get it over and know the worst that could happen; though he was not afraid of any worst. There was no Inferno in that vague world before him, nothing but dimness; though, perhaps, that was almost worse than an Inferno—a wide, vague, confusing desert of the unknown.

These thoughts were present with him even while he held playful conversations with Margaret and talked to old John and Bell, always with a certain kindly mockery in all he said to them. He laughed at Bell, though she was so important a personage, just as he laughed at his little Peggy: yet all the while, as he laughed, he remembered that to-morrow, perhaps, he might laugh no more. One thing, however, that he did not think it necessary to do was to send for the doctor, to try what medical skill might be able to suggest toward a little postponement of the end. What could the doctor do for him? there was nothing the matter with him. He was only drowsy, falling asleep without knowing why. Even now, while Sir Ludovic sat upright in his chair and defied it, he felt his eyelids coming together, his head drooping in spite of himself; and he felt a wondering curiosity in his mind, after a momentary absence of this kind, whether other people noticed it, or if it was only himself who knew.

"Do you want anything, papa?" said Margaret, at the door. She had her hat in her hand, and stood at the door looking in, with little more than her head visible and the outline of her light summer frock.

"Going out, my little Peggy?" He raised his head with a start, and the young, fresh apparition seemed to float upon him through some door in the visionary darkness about, as well as through that actual opening at which she stood.

"I think so, papa: unless you want me. It is such a bonnie morning, and Mr. Glen is going to begin his sketch. He thinks," said Margaret, with a little hesitation, "that it will be a better lesson for me to see him drawing than doing the straight lines; they were not very straight," she

added, with blushing candor. "I was not clever at them, though I tried."

"Mr. Glen," he said, with a little annoyance. "Mr. Glen again; did you not have enough of him yesterday?"

"Oh!" cried Margaret, half alarmed; "but yesterday it was to let you see the pictures, and to-day it is to learn me—"

"I hope he will not learn you—as you call it—too much," said the old man. "I wish somebody would learn you English. I have a great mind—" But here he stopped and looked at her, and seeing the alarm on Margaret's face, was melted by the effect which ought to have made him stern. Perhaps it might be so short a time that she would have any one to indulge her. "Well, my little Peggy! run, run away, since you wish it, and learn."

He ought to have been all the more determined because she wanted it so much. This was a lesson which his daughters Jean and Grace could both have taught him; but an old man with a young girl is proverbially weak. It just crossed his mind, though, that he ought to write to Jean and Grace, and invite them to hasten their usual visit. On the whole, they would take more trouble about his little Peggy than Ludovic could, to whom the old house would go. Sir Ludovic had no particular feeling one way or another about these middle-aged people. They were people whom he knew very well, of course, belonging to the family; but there was no special sympathy between them and himself. Ludovic had a large family, and "a good deal to do." It was all he could manage to make his ends meet, to keep up his position, to do the best he could for his own children. And Jean and Grace would be very fussy, they would worry his little girl out of her life; but still they would be kind to her, too kind—no more of her own way for poor little Peggy. He could not but smile as this aspect of the future rose before him; they would watch her so that she would be unable to put in a pin that they did not know of. And perhaps, in a way, it would be better for her; perhaps she had done too much as seemed right in her own eyes. This Rob Glen, for instance—Sir Ludovic was by no means sure that he was doing exactly as was right about Rob Glen. He would see to it, he would speak to Bell about it; and with this he floated away again on his own vague stream of thought, which was not thought.

Margaret came in, however, late in the afternoon, all aglow with enthusiasm and delight. "Oh, papa!" she cried, "it will make the most beautiful picture; he has taken it from the east, where you can see the house best, how it is built. I never knew it was so fine before. The tower all round, with that great ivy-tree, and then the side of the house all in shade with the big windows that are shut up, the windows *there*, you know, papa, that would look out upon the court if you could see through them; and then the gable, and the round turret with the stair in it, and all the little openings. But the sun would not stay in one place," said Margaret, laughing; "first it sent the shadows one way and then another, and gave Mr. Glen a great deal of trouble. I understand now about shadows," she added, with a serious air of importance. Sir Ludovic had been getting drowsy again. Her

coming woke him entirely, with a little pleased sensation of liveliness which roused his spirits.

"Have you been about your picture all this time?" he said.

"Yes, papa, out there among the potatoes. You could have seen us from the east window if you had liked to look. And Bell gave us 'a piece' at one o'clock, just as she used to do when I was little. Often she would give Rob a piece too—I mean Mr. Glen," said Margaret, blushing wildly; "I forgot he was not a boy now."

"My little Peggy," said Sir Ludovic, looking grave, "there are some things which you ought to be very careful not to forget."

"I did not mean to be rude, papa," said Margaret, half alarmed; "indeed it was not that: I don't think I ever could be rude and hurt people's feelings; indeed he said it himself; he said to Bell, 'You often gave me my lunch when I was a boy,' and she said, 'Ay, Rob Glen, many's the piece I've given you.' I was rather shocked to hear her," Margaret acknowledged, "but he only laughed, he was not offended; and so—"

"And so you did the same? that was not like my little girl," said Sir Ludovic; "whatever happens, you must always be civil. So it is a beautiful picture, is it—as good a picture of the old house as of the old man it belongs to? Two old things, my Peggy, that you will miss, that you will like to have pictures of when you go away."

"Papa!"—Margaret looked at him with suddenly dilated eyes—"I am not going away."

"Not till I go first," he said, with a sigh and a smile. "But that will not be long, that will come sometime; and then, my little Peggy, then—why, you must go too."

Margaret came behind his chair and put her arm round him, and laid down her head on his shoulder. The old man could have cried too. He too was sorry for what was going to happen—very sorry; but he could not help it. He patted the arm that had been thrown round him. "Poor little Peggy, you will miss the old man and the old house. It is well you should have pictures of them," he said.

"I want no pictures now," cried Margaret, weeping. "Oh, are you ill—are you ill, papa?"

"No, I am just as usual. Don't cry, my little girl. Whisht, now whisht, you must not cry; I did not mean to vex you. But we must not have too much of Rob Glen or Mr. Glen, whichever is his name. It might be bad for him, my darling, as well as for you."

"I don't care anything about *him* or *them*, or anything," cried Margaret; "all the pleasure is gone out of it. Will I send for the doctor? will I cry upon Bell? You must be feeling ill, papa."

"Will you speak decent English?" said her father, with a smile; her anxiety somehow restored himself to himself. "Cry upon Bell! what does that mean, my little Peggy? You are too Ffifish; you will not find anything like that in books, not in Shakspeare, or in—"

"It is in the Bible, papa," said Margaret, roused to a little irritation in the midst of her emotion. "I am quite sure it is in the Bible; and is not that the best rule."

Sir Ludovic was a little puzzled. "Oh yes, certainly the best rule for everything, my little girl; but the language, the English is perhaps a little old-fashioned, a little out of use, a little—"

"Papa! is it not the Word of God?"

Sir Ludovic laughed in spite of himself.

"It was not first delivered in English, you know. It was not written here; but still there is something to be said for your view. Now, my Peggy, run away."

But when she left him reluctantly, unwinding her arms from his shoulders slowly, looking at him anxiously, with a new awakening of feeling in her anxiety and terror, Sir Ludovic shook his head, looking after her. He was not capable of crossing his little girl; but he had his doubts that her position was dangerous, though she was far too innocent to know it. Unless what he had said were to disgust her altogether, how could he interfere to prevent the execution of this picture which it would be so pleasant for her to have afterward? "Decidedly," he said to himself—"decidedly! I must write to Jean and Grace."

CHAPTER XIV.

As there was, however, no more said on this subject, and Sir Ludovic was—probably having shaken off something of the heaviness of his mind by putting it in words—as gay as usual at dinner and during the evening, the impression on Margaret's mind wore off. She had been very unhappy for half an hour or so, then less wretched, then not wretched at all; deciding that it was nothing particular, that it was only some passing cloud or other, or a letter from her brother, or something which had vexed him about "business," that grand, mysterious source of trouble. Instead of going out that evening, she went down-stairs to where Bell sat in her chair "outside the door," breathing the quiet of the evening. Bell was full of the excitement of "the view." "It will be equal to any picture in a museum," said Bell. "To think a creature like *that*, that I mind just a little callant about the doors, should have such a power." Margaret, however, did not respond at first. Her mind was still occupied with her father, notwithstanding that his demeanor since had wiped much of the alarming impression away.

"Do you think papa is quite well?" she said. "Bell, will you tell me true? Do you think anything is the matter with papa?"

"The matter with your papa? is he complaining?" said Bell, hastily rising from her chair. "Na, no me, I've heard nothing; that's just the way in this world; the one that ought to ken never kens. Miss Margaret, what ails your papa?"

"It was me that was asking you, Bell: it was not him that complained; he spoke of—going away: that some day I would leave Earl's-hall, and some day he—would be gone," said Margaret, faltering, large tears coming to her eyes.

"Was that a'?" said Bell, sitting down again on her chair. "Dyin' is a thing we a' think of whiles. Sir Ludovic is just in his ordinary so far as I ken, just as particular about his dinner. No, no, my bonnie dear, you need not fash yourself about what the like of us old folk says. We say whiles mair than we mean; and other times it will come to us to think without any particular occasion (as we aye ought to be thinking) of our latter end."

"Would that be all, Bell?"

"That would just be all. I havena heard a word of ony complaints. He takes his meals aye in a way that's maist satisfactory, and John he would be the first to see if onything was wrang. Na, na, my bonnie doo, you need not fash your head about Sir Ludovic. He's hale and strong for his age, and runs nae risks: and the Leslies are long-living folk. We mustna count upon that for ourselves," said Bell, seriously. "I would not say sae to him; for to think of our latter end is what we should a' be doing, even the like of yoursell, young and bonnie, far mair auld folk; but auld Sir Patrick lived to be ninety. I mind him as weel as I mind my ain faither; and every Sabbath in the kirk, rain or shine, a grand-looking auld man with an ee like a hawk. Na, na, my bonnie dear, troubles aye sune enough when it comes; we needna gang out to look for it; but wait till it chaps at the ha' door."

This gave Margaret great comfort; the tension of her mind relaxed, and even before Bell had done speaking her young mistress had done thinking. She went back with a bound to the more agreeable subject. "Yon are to be sitting here, Bell," she said, "just here, when the picture is done."

"Bless my heart!" said Bell; the change was so sudden that she scarcely could follow it; "the picture? I thought you had forgotten all about the picture; but, Miss Margaret, what would ye hae an auld wife for, sitting here on her auld chair? Something young and bonnie, like yoursell now—or even Jeanie—would be mair to the purpose in a picture than an auld wife like me."

"But it is you I want," said Margaret, with pretty obstinacy. "What should I care about myself? And Jeanie is very good, but not like you. It must be you, Bell, or nobody. It would not be natural not to see you with your stocking outside the door."

"Weel, weel!" said Bell, with the air of yielding, half against her will, "you were aye a wilfu' miss, and would have your way, and few, few have ever crossed you. If a' your life be like the past, and ye win to heaven at the end, ye may say you were never out of it; for you've aye had your ain way."

"Do they get their own way in heaven?" said Margaret, half laughing; "but I wish you would not speak of the past like that, and my life. Nothing's past. It has always been just as it is now. Papa is only seventy-five—that makes fifteen years before he can be as old as grandpapa; and by that time I will be old myself. Why should there be any change? I like things to be as they are: you at the door, and John taking a look at the potatoes, and papa reading in the long room. And the summer nights so long, so long, as if they would never end."

"But this ane is ending, and you must go to your bed," said Bell. "The dew's no so heavy to-night after the rain; but it's time to go inbye and go to all our beds; it's near upon ten o'clock."

Margaret lingered to look at the soft brightness of the skies, those skies which never seemed to darken. And now that her mind was relieved, there was something else she wished to look at and pass a final judgment upon. Though it was ten o'clock and bedtime, she could still see all there was to see in the little sketch-book which Rob had given her to draw in. She had made

a few scratches in the intervals of her careful attendance upon the chief artist; and Rob had looked with satisfaction upon these scraps, and said that this was good and that better. Margaret, for her part, surveyed them now with mingled hope and shame. They were not like the picture at all, though they were intended to represent the same thing; but perhaps if she worked very hard, if she gave her mind to it! Bell did not think very much of them, as she came and looked over the young lady's shoulder. She shook her head. "He's a clever lad, yon," said old Bell, "but I wish he could learn you the piansy instead of drawing pictures. I canna think but you would come more speed." Margaret shut up her book hastily, with some petulance, not liking the criticism, and this time she did not resist the repeated call to go "inbye." She could not but feel that a great deal was wanting before she could draw like Rob; but as for the piano which Bell brought up upon all occasions, what could Margaret do? She had tried to puzzle out "a tune" upon the old spinnet in the high room with indifferent success, and this had given Bell real pleasure. But then that was apt to disturb papa; whereas these scratches of uneven lines in the sketch-book disturbed nothing except her own self-esteem and ease of mind.

Margaret said nothing about it next morning, learning prudence by dint of experience, but was out among the potatoes arranging the artist's seat, and the little table to hold all his requirements, and the water for his colors, in readiness for his appearance. The whole house indeed, except Sir Ludovic among his books, who had fallen back into his ordinary calm, externally at least, and asked no questions, was in agitation about this picture. Jeanie, poor girl, kept in the background altogether. She would not even come to look at the picture, though Bell adjured her to do so.

"What makes you blate, you silly thing?" Bell said. "It's no a gentleman; it's naeboddy but Rob Glen, Mrs. Glen's son, at Earl's-lee—a neebor lad, so to speak. You must have been at the school with him. Gang forward and see what's doing, like the rest." But nothing would make Jeanie gang forward. She felt sure by this time that he did not know she was here, and had begun to think that there was some mistake, and that perhaps he was not to blame. It wrung her heart a little, peeping from her turret-window, to see Miss Margaret hovering about him, looking over his shoulder, waiting on him, a more graceful handmaid than Jeanie; but at the same time a little forlorn pride was in her mind. Miss Margaret understood about his painting, no doubt, and could talk about things that were above her own range; but it was not in that stiff polite way that Rob would have conducted his intercourse with Jeanie. She watched them, herself unseen, with pain, yet with consolation. Not like that; not with so many commonplace witnesses—Bell lingering about looking on, even old John marching heavily across the lines of potatoes to take a look—would Rob have been content to pass the hours if she had been by, instead of Margaret. But it was well for Rob to have such grand friends. She would not put herself in the way to shame him or make him uncomfortable. Jeanie went to her work

magnanimously, and with a lightened heart. She would not even sing as she put the rooms in order, lest her voice should reach him through the open window, and he should ask who it was. She hid herself in the depths of the old house that he might not see her; but yet his presence made a difference in the atmosphere. She could not blame him now that she had seen him. And she had waited long already, and had not lost heart. After all, Jeanie reflected, nothing was changed; and insensibly a little confidence and hope came back to her; for it was very evident, for one thing, that he did not know she was here.

As for Margaret, she was very happy in the fresh exhilaration of the morning air, in the excitement of what was going on, and in the society of her new friend. Nobody had so much amused her, occupied her, filled her mind with novel thoughts as Rob Glen. To watch him as he worked was an unceasing delight. He had chosen his place on the edge of the little belt of wood which encircled Earl's-hall. Had the Leslies been well-to-do this would have been a mere flower-garden for beauty and pleasure; but as the Leslies were poor, it was potatoes, a more profitable if less lovely crop. The fir-trees, of which the wood was chiefly composed—for that corner of Fife is not favorable to foliage—sheltered them from the sun, which streamed full upon the old house, with all its picturesque irregularities. The little court, with its well and its old thorn-tree, which lay so deep in shadow in the evening, was now full of light. The door standing open let in a mass of sunshine into the little vaulted passage which led to the lower story, and touched the winding stair with an edge of whiteness; and the huge old "ivy-tree," as Margaret called it, the branches of which, against the wall which shut in the court on the west side, were like architecture, great ribs of wood, dark, mossy, and ancient, as if they had been carved out of stone—shone and glowed, and sent back reflections from the heavy masses of blunt-leaved foliage, which clad the tower completely from head to foot. Bell's chair was placed in front of this open door to show where the figure was to be.

"But to pit me there in the forenoon with the sun in my een, and a' the work of the house lyin' neglectit!" said Bell. "Well, I wat you'll never see me sae."

"It might be Sunday," suggested Rob, "the day of rest."

"The Sabbath's more than a day of rest," said Bell, reprovingly. "In the morning all right-minded folk are at the kirk, the only place for them; and to gie a stranger to suppose that me, I was letting ony idle lad draw my picture on the Lord's-day!"

"Bell, Bell!" cried Margaret, horrified.

But Rob could afford to laugh.

"Never mind," he said; "I am not offended. Bell can call me an idle lad if she likes—so does my mother, for that matter. She thinks I might as well swing on a gate all day, as do what I am doing now."

"Poor body!" said Bell, with a deep sigh of sympathy. "I feel for her with a' my heart. But you'll be wanting a piece," she added, turning to go in, "and, Miss Margret, there's a cold air about. If I was you I would slip on a bit of a jacket or something. The earth's damp

among the pitawties. I'll send you out your piece."

"I feel as if I were a boy again, fishing in the burn, when Bell speaks of a piece," said Rob, in an undertone.

"I hope you are not angry," said Margaret, humbly. "Bell always says whatever she pleases. She does not stand in awe of anybody—even my sister Jean, who is a grand lady—at least, I am sure she thinks she is very grand; but Bell never minds. You must not be angry, Mr. Glen."

"Angry! I am pleased. I like to feel myself a boy again; then too, if you will recollect, I had a beautiful little lady beside me, Miss Margaret, who would hold the rod sometimes and watch for a nibble."

"Don't call me *that*," said Margaret, with momentary gravity. "Yes—a funny little girl in a sun-bonnet. How glad I used to be when you caught anything! It was not very often, Mr. Glen."

"Not at all often, Miss Margaret; and sometimes you would take off your little shoes, and dabble your little white feet in the water—how white they were! I remember thinking the fishes would bite just to get nearer, just to have a sight of them."

"Indeed the fishes were not so silly," cried the girl, blushing, and half affronted, but too shy to venture on showing her offence. In such matters as this Rob's gentleman-breeding failed him. He did not know in what he had gone wrong. "The sun is changing already," she said, hurriedly; "have you got your shadows right, Mr. Glen? I think you will soon want the umbrella."

"Not yet," he said; "I can work for another hour; but here is old John interfering with my foreground. Is this the 'piece'? It is not so simple as that you used to share with me on the burn-side."

"It is a picnic," said Margaret, with a little awe, as John appeared, slowly progressing among the potatoes, with a white-covered tray. John's approach was a solemnity under any circumstances, but across the long lines of potatoes it was still more imposing.

"You're to pit that on, Miss Margaret," he said, after he had set down his burden, with a sigh of relief, handing to her the little gray jacket which he carried over his arm.

"But it is not cold. I don't want it, the sun is shining; and, John, will you bring the big umbrella, the great big one with the heavy handle, to shelter Mr. Glen?"

"She said you were to pit it on. I maun finish on errant afore I begin anither," said the old man. "She said there was a cauld air, and that you were to pit it on."

"I will when I am cold. Oh, tell Bell she has sent us a great deal too much. Chicken and cake, and white bread and cheese—and jam!" The last pleased the critic, and subdued her remonstrance. "But it is too much. I would like a little milk instead of the wine."

"She said the wine was better for ye," said the old man; "and she said you were to pit that on."

"Oh, John! you are worse, you are a great deal worse than Bell is. You never will hear any reason. She, if one speaks to her, one can

make her see what is sense," cried Margaret, half crying; "but you, you are a great deal worse—you are tyrannical!"

"I am doing what I'm bid," said John. "It's no me. Do I ken when you should pit on your jaicket and when you should pit it off? But *she* said you were to pit that on."

"And Bell is a very sensible woman," said Rob. "It is cold this morning after the rain; and, John, I hope you will tell her that her provision is noble. I never saw such a 'piece' before."

John made no reply. He gave a glance of surly disdain at the interloper. What had Rob Glen to do here, beside "our young leddy?" "And me to wait upon him—set him up!" the old man grumbled to himself as he went back grimly to the house, having seen one, at least, of his orders fulfilled. There were points upon which John was proud to think he himself was "maister and mair;" but on ordinary domestic occasions he was content to accept the rôle of executor, and see that his wife's behests were carried out.

Margaret, in her gray jacket (which was not unacceptable, after all), went away from Rob's side and opened her sketch-book. She did not choose to be laughed at, which she felt to be possible, and it was time for her to try that gable again, which had eluded her so often. To jump at the outline of a rugged Scotch gable, after having proved your incapacity to draw a straight line, was, perhaps, a bold proceeding; and there was a perplexing little round of masonry penetrated by slits of little windows, and giving light, as Margaret knew, to the second little spiral staircase, the one at the east end of the house, which tried her ignorance dreadfully, but which she returned to notwithstanding, again and again. Margaret was gazing up against the sky, intently studying this, when her eyes were caught by a face at the high window looking down as intently upon the group in the sunshine.

"Ah, Jeanie!" she said, with a nod and a smile; but Jeanie took no notice of the little salutation.

"Did you speak, Miss Margaret?" said Rob Glen, busy over his drawing, and not looking up.

"I was only nodding to Jeanie," said the girl.

Jeanie! Rob did not budge. It was the commonest of names; there was nothing in it to rouse his special attention. And even if he had known that it was the one Jeanie with whom he had some concern, would that have made any difference? He worked on quite calmly. But Jeanie withdrew in haste, with a pang for which she could not account. She had seen and heard, by the sound of the voices, that something was said between them; but Rob never looked up to see who it was of whom Miss Margaret spoke. When Jeanie came back to peep again, they were sitting together at the little luncheon Bell had sent them, with much talking and soft laughter, sharing the same meal, and reminding each of humbler picnic meals eaten together in other years. As they grew more at ease with each other, the doubtful taste of Rob's compliments ceased to offend Margaret; or perhaps in the greater intimacy of this odd conjunction, so absolutely free, yet so entirely under restraint, public to all the watchful eyes that guarded her, there was something that made him avoid com-

pliments. There is always much that is suggestive in a meal thus shared by two, with no intrusive third to break its completeness. A certain romance infolds the laughing pair; the very matter-of-fact character of the conjunction, the domesticity, the homeliness, increase their sense of union. It suggests everything that is in life. The boy and girl over their "piece," the youth and the maiden over their impromptu repast: what was it but playing at honey-mooning, a pleasant mockery, or essay at, or caricature of, the most serious conjunction? Even Margaret felt a certain half delightful shyness of her companion in this odd union, free as her mind was of all embarrassing thoughts; and as for Rob, the suggestion gave him a thrill of pride and pleasure not to be put into words. Jeanie stole to the window to look at them again, while they were thus engaged, and the sight went to her heart.

"If I were you, I wouldna let them bide ower lang philandering, they twa," said John. "I'm no that sure that I would have left them there ava'. Like twa young marrit folk, the ane forenests the ither—"

"Haud your tongue, you ill-thinking man!" cried Bell, with a half-shriek. "How dare ye! But be a lassie the maist innocent that ever was born, ye'll aye put it upon her that she kens as muckle as yonself!"

"It's no what she kens I'm thinking o': it's a' instinct," said John. "A lad and a lass—they're drawn to ane another; it's nature. I wish it was a gentleman that had come this gate instead o' that laud. Plenty gentlemen waste their time drawing pictures. There's Sir Claude; he's auld and a married man? I kent you would say that. Was I meaning Sir Claude? but he aye has his house fu' o' his ain kind; or even if it had been Randal Burnside—yon's a lad that will rise in the world; but whatever evil spirit sent us Rob Glen—"

"John, my man, you're no an ill man, and if you'll haud to the things ye understand—"

"I wuss there was one of ye a' that understood that poor bairn's living, and what's to come o' her," said John. "Sir Ludovic, he's no lang for this world."

"He's just in his ordinar, and his faither lived to ninety."

"He's no just in his ordinar. I havena likit the looks of him this month past; and now he sees it himsel'."

"Lord bless us, man!" cried Bell, in alarm; "and ye never said a word to me!"

"What good would that have done if I had said a word to ye? You canna keep out Death. If he's coming, he'll come, and no be hindered by you or me. But now he's found it out himsel'. Will I tell ye what he said to me no an hour ago? But I'll not tell you; maybe ye would think it was just naething, and pit your jokes on me."

"You may do just what you like," said Bell: "speak or no speak, he seems just in his ordinar to me."

"Is this like his ordinar?" says John, indignantly. "He says to me no an hour ago, 'Are the horses busy, John?' he said; and I says (for it doesna do to let on when wark's slack; you never ken what folk may take into their head), 'Oh ay, Sir Ludovic,' I says, 'they're aye busy.' 'Could we have them for the carriage

on Sunday?" he says. "Weel, Sir Ludovic," says I, "it might be sae; but what would it be for? Miss Margret, she aye walks, and wouldna thank ye for ony carriage; and the ither leddies, they're no here." Then he strikes his stick on the floor. "Can I have the carriage on Sunday?" he cries, him that's aye so quiet. Aweel! that's a'; and if that doesna prove that he's been turning many a thing ower in his mind."

"Was it to gang to the kirk?" said Bell, somewhat struck by awe; "he hasna been at the kirk this year or more."

"I tellt ye sae," said John; "and Sir Ludovic, he's no man to make a careless end. He'll do all decently and in order. He'll no let the minister think he's neglectit. Ye'll give me out my best claes, as if it was a funeral. I ken what he means, if naeboddy else does; and syne what is to become of that bairn?"

"Oh, man, hand your tongue, hand your tongue," cried Bell. "Sir Ludovic! that has aye been so steady and so weel in health. I canna credit what you say. Your best claes! Put on your bonnet, mair like, and gang and bid the doctor come this way, canny, the morn's morning, without saying a word to anybody. That's the thing for you to do. And now I'll send that laud away," she added, briskly. This was a little outlet to her feelings; and to do Bell justice, she was glad to have a moment alone after hearing this alarming news.

CHAPTER XV.

THE doctor came, very careful to explain that he had come to call out of friendship only, because it was so long since he had seen Sir Ludovic. But he could perceive nothing to justify John's alarm. Sir Ludovic was glad to see the neighbor who was more intelligent than most of his neighbors, and with whom he could have a little talk. The doctor was a plain man of homely Scotch manners and speech; but he knew all about the county and everybody in it, and was not unacquainted with books. Sir Ludovic, who was glad to be delivered from himself, and who found it easier to escape from the prospect which oppressed him, by means of society than in any other way, detained the doctor as long as he could, and listened with much more patience than usual to the gossip of the parish, and smiled at the jokes which Dr. Hume carried about from patient to patient to "give the poor bodies a laugh," he said.

"Come back again soon," the old man said, accompanying his visitor to the door. The doctor was pleased, for he had seen Sir Ludovic much less complaisant. He stepped into the vaulted kitchen before he left the house, to tell Bell what he thought.

"I see no difference in him," said Dr. Hume; "he's an old man. We are none of us so young as we once were, Bell; and an old man cannot live forever. He's bound to get an attack of bronchitis or something else before long, and to slip through our fingers. But I see nothing to be alarmed at to-day. There's a little bit of a vacant look in his eyes; but, Lord bless us! many of us have that all our lives, and never die a day the sooner. He tells me the ladies are expected—"

"Na, but that's news, doctor!" said Bell; "the ladies! it's no their time for three months yet, the Lord be thanked, and I've never heard a word."

"Well," said the doctor, "now you're warned, and you can take your measures accordingly. He certainly said they were coming. They're no the wisest women on the face of the earth; but still, if you are anxious, it would be a comfort, do you not think so, to have some of the family in the house?"

"Ye dinna ken our ladies, doctor—ye dinna ken our ladies," said Bell.

"Atweel, I ken a heap of ladies," said the doctor, with a laugh. He liked a joke at women when it was to be heard. "One's very like another; but if it was only for his little Peggy, as he calls her, I should think he would be glad to have his daughters here."

"He's no a bit glad, no more nor the rest of us—nor Miss Margaret either," said Bell; and it was with a clouded countenance that she saw the doctor mount his horse at the door of the court. And when John came in to ask what Dr. Hume thought, she gave him an answer which was full of sorrowful impatience. "He said nothing it was any pleasure to hear," said Bell, and it was only later that she unbosomed herself of her vexation. "He says there's nothing wrong; and syne he goes away telling me that the ladies are coming, and that it will be a comfort to have some of the family in the house. That means that a's wrong, so far as I'm equal to judging. Sir Ludovic in his bed wi' a long illness and the ladies here!"

Bell flung up her hands with a groan; the very idea was too much for her; but John was obstinate in his preconceived certainty.

"Na," he said, "Sir Ludovic will no have a long illness. He'll just fail, just in a moment; that's what he'll do. If I dinna ken him better than a dizen doctors, it would be a wonder—me that have been his body-servant these twenty years."

"I maun gang up the stair and see for myself," said Bell. She tied on her clean apron with decision, and could not quite banish from her countenance the look of a person who would stand no nonsense, who was not to be taken in—but whose inspection would be final. And Sir Ludovic was pleased to see Bell too. He was not annoyed to be disturbed. He turned toward her with a vague smile, and gave his book a scarcely perceptible push away from him. This little action made Bell's heart sink, as she confessed afterward. She would much rather have seen him impatient, and been requested to cut her errand short. On the contrary, her master was not displeased to talk. He let her tell him about the drawing which was still going on, and her own wonder that one who had been the other day "a callant about the doors" should possess such a wonderful gift.

"Callants about the doors are very apt to surprise us as they grow up," Sir Ludovic said, "and Rob Glen is certainly clever; but you must not let him lose his time here. It is certain that I cannot afford to buy his picture, Bell."

"But maybe the ladies would do it, Sir Ludovic," said Bell, seeing an opening; "maybe the ladies would like a picture of the auld house

—though me at the door (as Miss Margret will have me) would be a drawback. I hear from the doctor, Sir Ludovic, that you're expecting the ladies? I didna think it was near their time."

"To be sure," said Sir Ludovic, "I wrote, but the letter has never been posted. If you had not spoken I should have forgotten all about it. Bell, I thought they might come a little sooner."

"It's very true," said Bell, with a grave countenance, "that it's bonnie weather; and when they were here last, in September, we had nothing but wind and rain; but for a' that, when ladies have made their plans, it's a great deal of trouble to change them, and it's aye in September they come. Do you no think, Sir Ludovic, they would like it better if you let them come at their ain time?"

"Do you suppose they would think it a trouble, Bell?" Sir Ludovic had written his letter as a matter of duty for his little Peggy's sake; but he was not disinclined to get out of it, to allow a feasible reason for not sending it, if such a one should present itself; for he did not anticipate the arrival of his daughters with any pleasure.

"Weel, Sir Ludovic, you see they've all their plans made. They're awfu' leddies for plans. You ken yoursel' it's a' laid out every day what they're to do; and Mrs. Bellingham, she canna bide being put out o' her way."

"That's true, Bell, that's very true," said Sir Ludovic, suddenly remembering how his eldest daughter received any interference with her projects. "I am very glad you reminded me," said the old man; "after all, perhaps, I had better let things take their course. I thought it might be better, whatever happened, to have them here; but, as you say, Jean does not like any interference with—I think I will keep my letter to myself, after all."

"And nothing's going to happen that I ken of, Sir Ludovic. We are all in our ordinar."

"That is very true, too," he said, with a smile; "and now you can go away and tell John to bring me my wine and my biscuit. The doctor and you together have wasted my morning." He drew his book toward him again as he dismissed her. 'This was the only "good sign" that Bell saw in her master; and her face was so grave when she went down-stairs that John paused in his preparation for his master's simple luncheon with a sombre triumph.

"Awel? You'll not tell me I'm an auld fule again," John said.

"Then I'll tell you you're an auld raven, a prophet o' evil," said his wife, with vehemence. "Gang up the stairs this moment and gie the maister his drop o' wine; he's crying for that and his biscuit, and there he might sit, and you never take the trouble to gang near him. Oh ay!" said Bell, dreamily—"oh ay! The bairn divined it, and the auld man saw it, and the doctor sees it too, though he winna say sae; and Bell's the last to ken! In our ordinar, just in our ordinar! but them that has een can see the end."

However, though this foreboding gathered force by the adhesion of one after another, it was not as yet any more than a foreboding, and the days went on very quietly without any new event. The next Sunday, on which Sir Ludovic

had intended to go to church, was very wet, and it was not until a fortnight after his first announcement of his intention, that the old carriage was at last got out, and the horses, which had been making themselves useful in the farm, harnessed. They were not a very splendid or high-spirited pair, as may be conceived, but they answered the purpose well enough. It was a true summer Sunday, the sunshine more warm, the air more still, than on any other day. The roses were fading off the hedge-rows, the green corn was beginning to wave and rustle in the fields; the country groups that came from afar on every visible road, not all to the kirk on the hill (for there was a Free Church in the "laigh town," not to speak of "the chapel," which was Baptist, and had a dozen members, like the Apostles), were sprinkled with light dresses in honor of the season, and all was still in the villages save for this gathering and animated crowd. The big old coach, with its old occupant, called forth much excitement in the Kirkton. Carriages and fine people had failed to the parish church.

Perhaps it is one of the penalties which Scotland has paid for being no longer unanimous, and dividing herself into different camps, that her gentry should have deserted that old centre of local life, and left the National Church which has played so large a part in Scotch history. It is one of the least sensible as well as the least lovely features of modern Scotland. Of all the squires in this division of Fife, not one but old Sir Ludovic united in the national worship. The others drove miles away to the "English Chapel" at the county town, which was gay with their carriages and finery, like the corresponding "English Chapel" in Florence or Rome; very like it, indeed, in more ways than it is necessary to mention. Gentility poured thither, even the rich shopkeepers, or at least the manufacturers of the second generation; for to belong to the English Church gave a kind of brevet rank. Sir Ludovic, perhaps, was too indifferent to change his ways in his old age; and then neither he nor the world required any outward proof that he was a very superior person. Why it was that he had set his mind on going to church at all after this long gap in his attendance it would be hard to tell. He could not have told himself. It was like a last visit to court, a last parade to an old soldier, a thing to be done as long as he could calculate upon his time, before the days had arrived, which he could see advancing, when he would no longer have command of his own movements.

Sir Ludovic felt a sensation of relief when he had fairly set out. Of this thing, then, which he had determined to do, he was not to be balked. He was to have power and time to accomplish this last duty. The burial-place of the Leslies was close to the east end of the church, the head of the vault touching the old chancel, a relic of the times when to be near that sacred spot in the morning quarter, "toward the sunrising," was to be doubly safe. Here Sir Ludovic stood for a moment, looking less at the familiar grave than at the still more familiar landscape, the low hills round the horizon on three sides, the glimmer of the sea that filled up the circle, the broad amphitheatre of fertile fields that swept around. He did not care to turn from that wide and lib-

eral prospect, all sweet with summer air and warm with sunshine, to the heavy mass of stone that shut in the remains of his kindred. He gave one glance at it only, as he walked past, though it was that spot he had chosen to view the landscape from. A faint smile came upon his face as he looked at it. There was his place waiting and ready, and soon to be filled. He asked himself, with a little thrill of strange sensation, whether he would feel the breezes, such as were always rife in Stratheden, or have any consciousness of the landscape, when he lay there, as, by-and-by, he should be lying. He walked very steadily, yet with a nervous tremor, of which he himself was conscious, if nobody else, and kept his hand upon Margaret's shoulder, scarcely to support him—that was not necessary—but yet to give him a little prop. Some of the people, the elders and the farmers who felt themselves sufficiently important, threw themselves in his way, and took off their hats with kindly respect.

"I'm real glad to see you out, Sir Ludovic," and, "I hope you're well this fine morning, Sir Ludovic," they said. The old man took off his hat and made them all a sweeping bow.

"Good-morning to you all, my friends," he said, and, with a little additional tremor, hurried into church, to be safe from all these greetings. The church, as we have already said, was a monstrous compound, such as perhaps only Scotland could produce nowadays. The old door opened into a noble but gloomy old Norman church, very small, but lofty and symmetrical, in the corners of which some old monuments, brass denuded of their metal (if that is not a bull), rude in Northern art, but ancient, and looking, by dint of their imperfections, more ancient than they were—were piled together. In the little round basement of the tower, where there had been a tiny chapel behind the altar in the old days, a man in his shirt-sleeves stood pulling the rope, which moved a cracked and jingling bell; and the vast chancel arch opposite was blocked up with a wooden partition, through which, by means of a little door, you entered the new painted and varnished pews of the modern building, which Sir Claude Morton had built for the parish. The parish was quite contented, be it allowed, and Sir Claude went to the English Chapel, and did not have his sins brought home to him every Sunday; and among the higher classes you may be sure that it was the old Reformers and John Knox who were supposed to be in fault, and not an enlightened connoisseur like Sir Claude, who did so much for the art-instruction of the world away from home. Sir Claude was the chief "heritor" of the parish, for the lands of the Leslies had dwindled almost to nothing.

We will not affirm that Sir Ludovic would have done much better, but then, at least, he was not a connoisseur. He, for his part, made no reflections upon this as he went in, and placed himself in the great square pew, the only one of the kind in the new church, all lined with red cloth, and filled with chairs instead of benches, which marked his own importance in the parish. He thought of the difference between the old and the new without troubling himself about art, and with a little shiver acknowledged that the light and air and brightness of the wooden

barn were more comfortable than the stately grace and dampness of the old building, which was, like himself, chilled and colorless with age. But how many generations of old men like himself had passed under the great gray arch that "swore," as the French say, at the vulgar new walls! A lifetime of threescore and fifteen years was as nothing in the history of that ancient place. And there it would stand for generations more, watching them come and go—It, and he with it, lying so close under the old stones. Would it be anything to Ludovic Leslie, once placed there, who came and who might go? This thought gave him, as it always did, a kind of vertigo and swimming of the brain. To fancy one's self—*one's self*, not another, as insensible to everything in life—

"Whirled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees."

Is that possible? Sir Ludovic tried, but could not do it. It made his head swim round and round.

All the time the people were taking their places, clattering in with much noise, and perhaps not much reverence. Ordinarily they waited about, the men at least, until the bell stopped and the hour had struck. But perhaps out of respect to old Sir Ludovic, who had not been there for so long, and who might never—who could tell?—be there again, for he was an old man, they came in after him, making a great noise, shutting and fastening after them the doors of their pews. And then Dr. Burnside walked into the pulpit, solemnly preceded by the beadle with the big Bible, and the service began. Neither Sir Ludovic nor his daughter paid any attention to the fact that the singing of the old metrical psalms was very rough and tuneless. Margaret did not know much better, having had no training, and heard no music; and Sir Ludovic, it must be confessed, was full of his own thoughts, and paid but little attention. He was scarcely caught even by the words of that Psalm, known from their cradles to all Scots, which Dr. Burnside hastily, and with some perturbation, on hearing of Sir Ludovic's presence, had changed for the one before chosen.

Dr. Burnside had not had it in his power for a long time now to set Sir Ludovic's duty before him. And when his wife brought him the news that the old carriage from Earl's-hall had passed, with the Leslies in it, the minister had a moment of great excitement. His sermon had not been at all adapted for such an occasion, but had been addressed very generally to the parish world about its commonplace sins of gossip and fibbing, and such-like. Dr. Burnside ran to his writing-table and hastily chose a sermon of a different complexion. He had preached it before, but he had a great and consoling consciousness that nobody paid much attention, and certainly Sir Ludovic had never heard it. It was about the conclusion of life. He did not think of it as touching himself, and never had known the tremulous attempt to realize that conclusion which made Sir Ludovic's head turn round; but he knew that an old man ought to think of his latter end, and that it was of great importance not to neglect an opportunity that might not occur again.

"Will you tell the precentor, my dear, to wait

a moment. I have some changes to make," the Doctor said, hastily; and thus it was that the Psalm was altered, and the one now chosen sung to an unusual tune, which had been intended for the former one, and which put the rude singers out—

"Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill;
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still,"

sang the rough, rural voices. They sang as if the object of their worship was far away at sea, and required a hearty shout to catch his ear. And Sir Ludovic did not pay much attention. He had known the words by heart ever since he knew anything, which made them less striking to him. Besides, he had no trouble on that point; he did not doubt the rod and staff that would support him; he wanted rather dimly to know what sort of place that dark valley was, and what—no whether it was bliss or despair, but *what*—lay beyond.

Dr. Burnside preached his sermon with great feeling and great meaning, so that everybody in church felt that it had a bearing upon Sir Ludovic; but Sir Ludovic himself did not see it. He propped himself in the corner and listened respectfully, sometimes asking himself, however, how Burnside could keep on so long, and why the fact of being in the pulpit should bring twaddle to the lips of a reasonable man. Once when the good Doctor was moved by his own eloquence almost to weeping, Sir Ludovic was quite roused too, and sat more upright, and gave his whole attention to the speaker; but it was rather with an amazed desire to know what could have so much moved his old friend than from any mere personal motive. Even then he could not make it out. He said to himself that what you say yourself may possibly seem more striking than what another says; but still he could not see what Burnside had to cry about. Notwithstanding those thoughts, which were not visible, Sir Ludovic was a most respectful and devout worshipper. Though prayer is supposed to be extempore in the Church of Scotland, and the idea of reading their devotions out of a book would have shocked the people beyond measure, yet Sir Ludovic having gone to church regularly for a great many years, knew Dr. Burnside's prayers by heart, and was able to follow them as closely as if they had been in a prayer-book. He knew where and how the habitual supplications would come. He knew in what words the good minister would embody his ascriptions of praise. All was familiar to him, as if it had been going on forever, as if it would never come to an end.

By-and-by it was over, and the people all streamed out with equal noise and no more reverence, putting on their hats before they were out of church, and beginning to talk in loud whispers. It was over like everything else—another thing ended—another something removed between him and the end. This was the thought that came involuntarily to the old man. He smiled to himself, but not with pleasure, with a kind of amused pain or painful amusement, as the little roll of things to be done was worked out. Here was another over and done with, though it had begun only a moment since. Just so the philosopher might have watched the hours

stealing away that lay between him and that slave with the hemlock, just so noticed the gradual development of the symptoms afterward—the beginning of the death-cold, the rising gasp in the throat. Sir Ludovic was like Socrates, yet with a curious sense that it was somebody else he was watching, not, it could not be, himself. He felt half inclined to laugh as the things to be got through lessened in number; and now this church-going was over, which was one of the last incidents of all.

"Even though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill."

No, no, not any ill; but *what*? That was the question; and in the mean time this was ended too.

"I think we may go now, the crowd is gone, papa," whispered Margaret; and he assented with a smile. They came out again, once more through the fine Norman arch, which had been there from time immemorial.

"Just there, my little Peggy, is where my place will be," he said, still smiling, pointing to the wall of the apse, and came out, with his hand upon her shoulder, into the sunshine, his erect, delicate head, with its white hair, held up with unconscious, gentle stateliness, leaning upon the young creature in her white frock—leaning only a very little, rather for love than for support. A great many people had lingered about the church-yard, scattered among the graves, to look at them. The parish that day had listened to the sermon much less drowsily than usual. They had recognized by instinct that it was not themselves, but Sir Ludovic, who was addressed, and they had all been interested to hear what the Doctor had to say to Sir Ludovic. They stood with friendly and shy curiosity, pretending to study the tombstones, to look at him as he came out. It was a long time since he had been there before, and who could tell if he would ever be there again?

And the sight of the pair touched the people. An old man leaning upon his child is always a touching sight, and Margaret's pretty, slim figure, in her white frock, her head raised to him, a look of wistful half-anxiety in her eyes, mixed with her pleasure in having him by her, made a great impression upon the kindly neighbors. Some of the women unfolded the handkerchiefs which they carried with their Bibles and put them to their eyes. He was "sore failed" since he had been last seen at the kirk—failed and frail, and no long for this world. And ah, how well the Doctor had set his duty before him! The father and daughter went softly round the east end of the old church; and it was when they were passing the Leslie vault again, that Sir Ludovic suddenly stumbled. It was not "a stroke," nor any fainting on his part, as at first the trembling yet eager spectators thought, but only a projecting stone in his way, against which his foot caught. Margaret gave a cry of distress.

"It is nothing, my Peggy, nothing," said the old man. But the shock and the shake affected him, and he turned very pale, and tottered as he went on.

"Will he take my arm?—ask him to take my arm," said some one close by. Sir Ludovic did not wait to be entreated; he put forth his hand

eagerly and grasped the strong young arm, which he felt, without knowing whom it belonged to, to be sustaining and steady.

"That is right, that is all I want," he said, and walked along the rest of the path to the carriage, leaning upon Rob Glen. Margaret was at his other side. He smiled at her, and bade her not be frightened. "This is all I want," he said, leaning upon the young man. As for Margaret, she, in her fright and anxiety, thought nothing of the words he was saying; but who can describe with what a thrill the repeated assurance went through the ambitious heart and glowing imagination of Rob Glen?

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE were a great many spectators of this scene in the church-yard. Mrs. Burnside, the minister's wife, had been detained most unwillingly by some importunate "poor bodies" from the "laigh toun," and was hurrying round from the other end of the church, with her son Randal, to speak to "the Earl's-hall family," when Rob Glen thus made himself conspicuous. There were various people who held the opinion that he had made himself conspicuous, and none more than Mrs. Burnside, who thought the group very incongruous. Margaret on one side, and a young country lad, Janet Glen's son, on the other! It was quite out of the question. But an old man was an ill guide for a young girl. She hastened round, calling Randal to follow, and reached the gate just as John was putting up the carriage steps.

"Margaret, my dear Margaret, will you not come to the Manse and get a glass of wine? And, Sir Ludovic, I hope you're not hurt. The Doctor will be quite disappointed if he does not see you."

Rob Glen stood at the carriage-door, but Mrs. Burnside took no notice of him.

"Thank you," said Sir Ludovic. "I'm not hurt; but I've got a shake, and the best thing I can do is to get home. Tell the Doctor I will be glad to see him, very glad to see him, whenever he will come so far—with my thanks for a very good sermon." He smiled, but he was still very pale, and old John stood upon little ceremony. He took his seat beside the coachman, and bade him in low tones "no to bide a moment if it was the Queen, but to get hame, to get hame." The consequence of this was that the carriage was already in motion when Mrs. Burnside resumed.

"A glass of wine will do you good, Sir Ludovic; and here's my son Randal. Margaret, my dear, you're not going like this, without a word!" cried the Minister's wife; but Margaret only waved her hand, and said something that was inaudible in the rush of the carriage-wheels.

"I don't call this civil," said Mrs. Burnside, growing red. "I cannot think it civil, Randal, either to you or to me."

"It was not intended for incivility," said Rob Glen. "But Sir Ludovic was shaken. He was more shaken than you would have thought possible. It was the best thing he could do to get home, and I think I will go and tell the doctor. He has certainly grown much weaker within the last month."

How did Rob Glen know how Sir Ludovic had been for the last month? Mrs. Burnside looked upon him with a disapproving countenance. He had made himself a great deal too conspicuous. Janet Glen's son, a lad of no consideration! what right had he to put himself in the way?

"Sir Ludovic shows himself so little that there's very few can be able to judge," she said, meaning to snub the forward young man. And what should Randal do but neutralize all her dignity by making a step forward with friendly hand outstretched?

"Why this," he said, "must be Rob Glen?"

"Oh yes, it is Rob Glen," said his annoyed mother; while Rob accepted the overture graciously. Randal was a year or two older than Rob, and had begun life in the company of the whole juvenile family at the parish school; an early association which made all his father's parishioners his friends. He was a handsome young fellow, full of high spirits and kindness, but so shy that the paths of society were pain and grief to him. He had been absent for a long time, studying in Germany, and had but lately returned, and taken his place in Edinburgh, with every prospect of success at the bar; for he had a family firm of Writers to the Signet behind him. Though Randal had an old boyish kindness for little Margaret, her grown-up looks had somewhat disconcerted him, and it was with more relief than regret that he had seen the carriage turn away. But Randal's shyness did not affect him in respect to the people of the parish, to most of whom his notice was a favor; and, indeed, at this moment he had no idea that it was anything else than an honor to Rob Glen.

"You may as well tell your father, Randal, that Sir Ludovic has gone," said Mrs. Burnside, with a little nod to the intruder. "Good-morning, Rob; I saw your mother, worthy woman, was out this morning. I am glad her cold is better;" and, so saying, she went slowly away toward the Manse in anything but a tranquil state of mind. She was not mercenary, nor had she really engaged in any matrimonial speculations for her son. But he was a young man, she well knew, who would be a credit to everybody belonging to him; and if Margaret and he had met, and if they had taken a fancy to each other, why then—They had both a little money; indeed, it was generally known that Margaret had more than a little; but upon this point the minister's wife assured herself that she had no information; and they were both well-born (for the Burnside's were as old as anything in the county), and it would have been very suitable: he a rising young lawyer, with a good profession and a good head, and the best of prospects before him. There was no unworthy scheming in her desire to bring these two perfectly matched young people together. The question in her eyes was not, was Randal good enough for Margaret? but, was Margaret good enough for Randal? But they had played together when they were children, and there was nobody far or near so like Margaret as Randal, so like Randal as Margaret. This was what Mrs. Burnside was thinking, as she walked very gently toward the Manse. The children and the old women did not courtesy when they

met her, for such are not the habits of rural Scotland; but the little things looked at her with shy smiles, and the women wished her good-day, and were blithe to see Mr. Randal back. "And so am I, Jenny," she said; "more glad than words can say."

"Eh, mem, ye hae nae need to say it; a' the kirk," said the old woman, sympathetic, "could see it in your face." And why should she not ask herself, what was the very best thing to be had—the fairest and the sweetest to get for her boy? But that intrusive Rob Glen making himself so conspicuous! what was he, a country lad, nobody at all, not a gentleman, to put himself in Randal's way?

"And what have you been doing, Rob, all these years? I've heard of you from time to time; but I've been wandering, as you know, and for some time back I know nothing. Little Margaret Leslie, I thought her a child, and lo! she's a lovely lady. I thought I should have found you in the pulpit preaching for my father; but here you are, without so much as a black coat. What has happened to you?"

"Not much," said Rob. He paused rather nervously, and looked at his gray coat, wondering, perhaps, was it the proper dress to come to church in, even when you have ceased to think of being a minister. Randal's coat was black, and he seemed to Rob a young man of fashion. This thought made him very uncomfortable. "Indeed nothing at all has happened to me. I am a failure, Mr. Burnside. Your father tries to set me right; but I am afraid we don't even agree as to the meaning of words."

"A failure?" said Randal, puzzled.

"Yes; the church is too exacting for me. I can't sign a creed because my great-grandfather believed it."

"Ah! oh!" said the other young man. It meant that he had nothing to say on the subject, and did not care to enter into it; but it meant at the same time the slightest tone of disapproval, a gravity which would not smile. Randal thought a man should stick to his colors, whatever they were. "And what are you doing now?"

"Nothing; idling, drawing, dreaming, losing my time; absolutely nothing;" then he added, for he did not want to conceal his privileges, "I have been busy for the last fortnight with a picture of Earl's-hall."

"Are you turning artist, then? I did not think the parish had any such possession. I hope I may come and see it," said young Burnside, wondering whether he might venture to ask his old school-fellow to dinner. He would have done it instantly had he been alone. But his mother was not to be trifled with. As he hesitated, however, his father joined him, coming from the church.

"So Sir Ludovic has gone," said the doctor; "I expected he would have waited to see you, Randal, and perhaps gone on to the Manse; but he is looking frail, and perhaps he was wearied. It's an unusual exertion for him, a very unusual exertion. Good-day, Rob; I am glad to see you have resumed church-going; I hope it's a good sign."

"I don't think it means much," said Rob; "but perhaps it would be a good thing if I were to go on to the doctor, and tell him of Sir Ludovic's stumble. It might be well that he should know at once."

"What's about Sir Ludovic's stumble?" said the Minister; while Randal called after the other as he went away, "I will come and see you to-morrow."

Rob Glen replied with an acquiescing nod and wave of his hand. But he said within himself, "if you find me," and went along with a jubilant step and all kinds of dreams in his head. Sir Ludovic had not received Rob with enthusiasm when he had gone to Earl's-hall. He had not applauded his drawings as Margaret did, who knew nothing about it, though he allowed them to be clever. But at the same time he had always tolerated Rob, never objected to his visits, nor to the hours which Margaret had spent flitting about his encampment among the potatoes. If he had disapproved of this association, surely he would have prevented it; and what could those words mean, as the old man grasped at his offered arm, "This is all I want?" Wonderful words! meaning all, and more than all, that the brightest hopes could look for. "This is all I want." Margaret had taken no notice, but it did not seem possible to Rob that she could have heard such words unmoved. It is astonishing how easy it is to believe miracles on our own behalf. In any other case, Rob Glen would have had enough of the shrewd good-sense of his class to know how very unlikely it was that Sir Ludovic Leslie should choose for his young daughter, who was an heiress, in addition to every other advantage she possessed, an alliance with the son of a small farmer in the neighborhood, a "stickit minister," not at all successful or satisfactory even to his own humble kith and kin. But the fact that it was he himself, Rob Glen, who was the hero, dazzled him, and threw a fictitious air of probability upon things the most unlikely. "This is all I want." What could the fond father, who has selected an Admirable Crichton to insure his child's happiness, say more?

"Oh ay," said Mrs. Glen, on her way home from church. "The Earl's-hall family makes a great work with our Rob. He's there morning, noon, and night. I never see him, for my part. Either he's drawing pictures of the house, or he's learning Miss Margaret to draw them, or he's doin' something for Sir Ludovic. They take up a' his time that he never does a hand's turn for his ain affairs. It's an awfu' waste of time; but when there are young folk concerned, really you never can ken what's the maist profitable occupation; just nonsense, in that kind of way, is sometimes mair for their advantage in the long-run; but that's no my way of judging in the general, far enough from my way."

"That is just what I was thinking," said Mrs. Cupar, of the Longriggs, a neighboring farm, but a much more important one. If Mrs. Cupar walked, it was because she chose to do so, not from any need to employ this vulgar natural mode of locomotion; for, besides her husband's gig, there was a pony-chaise at her orders, and her dress was made by one of the best *artistes* in Edinburgh, and her daughters, who came behind, were young ladies who might have walked through the Park without remark, infinitely better dressed than Margaret Leslie. They were better than Margaret in a great many ways; they could play on the piano; and it was their mother's determi-

nation to keep them clear of Rob Glen, or any other suitor of his class, that made her so "neighbor-like" with Rob Glen's mother. If he had finished his studies in an orthodox way, and become a "placed minister," then, indeed, she might have relaxed her vigilance; but as matters were, no fox could have been more dangerous to the hen-roost than this idle young man of education, who was only a sma' farmer's son. Small farmers, who cannot be denied as part of the profession, yet who sink it down among the ranks of the commonalty, are not liked by their larger neighbors in the kingdom of Fife.

"That is just what I was thinking," said Mrs. Cupar. "I did not imagine you were one who would give in to idleness under any excuse."

"No me," said Mrs. Glen; "if my lad had taken up his head with foreign travel, and wanderings about the world like that son of the minister's, Randal—no that it's our place to judge our neighbors; but there is a time for everything, as is said in Scripture, and I've confidence in my Rob that it's no just for nothing his stopping here so long. They make a great work with him at Earl's-hall. Sir Ludovic, you see for yourself, is very frail. How he grippit to Rob's arm! It's a grand thing for an auld man to find a young arm to lean upon, and a kind person to be good to him."

Mrs. Glen could not help bragging a little. She was as much elated as Rob was, and as entirely blind to all the difficulties, though in any other case, who would have seen more clearly? She had kept herself in the background, having sense enough to see that Rob's mother could not further his pursuits; but she could not hold her tongue, or refrain from waving her flag of triumph before her neighbors—these neighbors who were themselves "upsetting," and gave themselves airs much beyond any possible at Earl's-lee. Mrs. Glen was not by any means sure that "the Misses" at Longriggs, and their mother had not designs of their own upon her son, and, to tell the truth, either Bessie or Jessie Cupar would have been an excellent match for Rob. If he had fulfilled his fate and become "a placed minister," what could have been better? But Margaret Leslie and her fortune had intoxicated Mrs. Glen. She could not help flourishing this sublime hope before her neighbors' eyes.

"Then we need not be surprised if we hear of an engagement," said Mrs. Cupar, "in that quarter." She thought the woman was daft, as she said to the girls afterward. Miss Leslie! a beauty, and an heiress, and one of the proudest families in Fife. Surely the woman was out of her wits! But it was as well to give her her own way, and hear all that there was to hear.

"Na, it's no for me to say," said Mrs. Glen. "I'm no saying just that. I'm saying nothing, it's no my part, and Rob, he's no a lad to brag; but I keep my een open, and I form my ain opinions for all that. My son's not just a common lad. Till something opens him up, he's real hard to divine. He's more than ordinar clever, for one thing, and when he gets with folk that can enter into his ways—I'm free to confess I'm no one of that kind myself. I've nae education to put me on a par with him. There's his pictures. You've no seen his pictures? I'm told, and I can well believe it," said the proud mother, "that there's many a warse in the National

Gallery, though that's considered the best collection in a' the world."

"Dear me, now, to think of that!" said the other farmer's wife. "Jessie and Bessie are both very good at drawing. They were considered to have a great taste for it; but for my part I've always thought for a man that it was a great wastery of time."

"No when it's the best kind," said Mrs. Glen, in her superior knowledge. "I wouldna say for the young ladies' bits of drawings; but when it's the right kind, there's nothing I ken that brings in more money." Rob's mother felt justly that this was the true test. "There's thousands on thousands o' pounds to be made by it; but it wants a real genius, and that's just what Rob has shown."

"Dear me," said her listener again. Notwithstanding a natural undercurrent of scorn, she could not help being impressed by so positive an assertion. Had Jessie and Bessie shown real genius? There was something deeply impressive, even though she scarcely believed in it, in a thing by which thousands and thousands could be made.

"I must look out the girls' sketches to-morrow," she said, "and see what your son thinks of them. It must be a great comfort for you, Mrs. Glen, when he has made up his mind not to follow one thing, to find he has a good prospect in another. It's not often a young man has that luck when he gives up what he's been brought up to. But now I must bid you good-day, for this is our nearest road; and I hope you'll let me hear when anything happens." "The woman's daft," Mrs. Cupar said, as she went on. "She thinks because Sir Ludovic, poor old frail gentleman, gripped Rob's arm, finding him the foremost, that he's going to give her son his daughter Margaret Leslie!—that thinks herself of a different kind of flesh and blood from the like of you; and I would think myself sore brought down in the world if I had to give one o' you to Rob Glen!"

"Well, mamma," said one of the girls, "he is what the maids call a bonnie lad." "And very like a gentleman," said the other. They both gave a glance behind them as they spoke, not at all unwilling, if truth were told, to be overtaken by Rob Glen.

"Jessie, Jessie, how often must I tell you not to be vulgar? There is nothing so vulgar as that broad Scotch," cried the genteel farmer's wife. She was more horrified than Sir Ludovic was with Margaret's idioms and Fifeish confusion of grammar; but the girls were not nearly so decided as to the folly of Mrs. Glen. They thought there was something to say on the other side. Margaret Leslie had no education; she had never been out of that old crow's-nest of a house. She had never had masters for anything, or seen the world. Family was not everything, nor money either; and if there was a nice-looking, handsome, well-educated young man who did not mind her want of education—Mrs. Cupar thought her own girls were almost as daft as Mrs. Glen.

But there was another humble pedestrian coming after them, who was of the same opinion as the girls. Jeanie had seen Mrs. Glen and her son from a distance, but had not been seen by Rob, who had eyes only for Margaret, and, un-

der the shade of her book, the poor girl had watched him, all unconscious of her observation. He had not been at church before since he returned to his mother's house, and all his thoughts were bent, it seemed to Jeanie, upon the large, square, red-lined pew which held her master and Miss Margaret. Even if Margaret were not there, was it likely that he would have greeted her in the face of day—he, a gentleman, and she but a servant-lass? Jeanie felt the impossibility of the connection more than she had ever done before. She had seen nothing, indeed, that was impossible in it when she had gone to his uncle's shop, or taken a Sunday walk with Rob out by Glasgow Green and upon the water-side. But here the reality of the matter burst upon her. She saw him walk past with Sir Ludovic leaning on his arm, while she hung back while "the kirk skaaled." She saw him shake hands with Randal Burnside. And she was nothing but Bell's helper, a servant-lass. Her father had been one of the elders who stood at the plate on this eventful day, and John Robertson understood the wistful look his daughter gave him when the service was over.

"Ay, ay, he saw me weel enough—he could not help seeing me. He gave me a little nod as he passed, quite civil: but—I would think na mair of such a whillie-wha," said John.

"You must not ca' names, faither," said gentle Jeanie; but it was a heavy heart which she carried along that same road, keeping far behind Mrs. Glen and Mrs. Cipar and the young ladies. It was no wonder to Jeanie, nor had she any doubt about Sir Ludovic. Who would not be glad of such a lad as Rob? She was not angry with Margaret, nor even with Rob himself, for that matter. It was her own fault ever to think that she was his equal. What was he but a lad, die, that did not know his own mind, when he had pledged himself to her that ought to have known better? She was younger than he was, yet she ought to have known better. He was not a whillie-wha, as her father said, but only too tender-hearted, liking to please those he was with. Only this could ever have made him waste so much of his time and kindness upon John Robertson's daughter—a servant-lass—he that, at the least, would be "a placed minister!" At last Jeanie saw clearly the absurdity of the thought.

CHAPTER XVII.

SIR LUDOVIC was "none the worse" of his stumble, and next day all things went on as before. Rob Glen was one of the first who came to inquire, and he was asked to go up-stairs, and was thanked for his aid with all ceremony, yet kindness, Margaret standing by, beaming upon him, beaming with pleasure and gratitude. Rob, she felt, was her friend much more than her father's, and she was grateful to him for his succor of her father, and grateful to Sir Ludovic for accepting the service. She stood by and smiled upon the young man. "I am very thankful too," she said, "Mr. Glen," and the look in Rob's eyes made her blush. She had always been given to blushing; but Margaret blushed more than ever now, in the vague excitement of thought and feeling which these last

weeks had revived in her. They had been spent almost in Rob's constant companionship, so long had the sketching lasted; and the two had been for hours together, alone, in close proximity, with unlimited opportunities of conversation. He had told her a great deal about himself, and she had revealed to him all the corners of her innocent memory. They had become again as closely united as when little Margaret sat by the big boy, with her little feet dabbling in the water, spoiling his fishing, but filling him with vague delight.

He had indulged in various other loves since then; but, after all, when you came to look back upon it, was not little Margaret his first love? He got her to go with him one day to the burn, which they had haunted as children, and told her he meant to make a picture of it. This was just the spot, he said. It was nothing but a bit of grassy bank, a ragged willow dipping into the brook, a great old hawthorn-bush upon the slope. "You used to be so fond of the white hawthorn" ("And so I am still," Margaret said), "and here was where you sat with the clear water running over your little feet. I think I can see them now." Margaret grew crimson, but that was an effect so easily produced; and she too thought she could remember sitting on these summer afternoons, with the soft ripple, like warm silk, playing over her feet, and the scent of the hawthorn (we do not call it May in Fife) filling the air, and flies and little fishes dimpling the surface of the pool. "I will paint a picture of it," said Rob; and the idea pleased her. Thus the days went on; they were shorter than any days had ever been before to Margaret, full of interest, full of pleasure. An atmosphere of soft flattery, praise, too delicate to be put into words, a kind of unspoken worship, surrounded her. She was amused, she was occupied, she was made happy. And it did not occur to her to ask herself the reason of this vague but delightful exhilaration. She felt it like an atmosphere all round her, but did not ask herself, and did not know what it was.

And perhaps with this round of pleasant occupation going on outside, she was not quite so much with her father, or so ready to note his ways as she had been. On the Monday evening, Rob, by special invitation, dined with them, and exerted himself to his utmost to amuse Sir Ludovic; and after this beginning he came often. He did amuse Sir Ludovic, sometimes by his knowledge, sometimes by his ignorance; by the clever things he would say, and the foolish things he would say—the one as much as the other.

"Let your friend come to dinner," the old man would say, with a smile. "John, you will put a plate for Mr. Glen." And so it came about that for a whole week Rob shared their meal every evening. When Sir Ludovic got drowsy (as it is so natural to do after dinner, for every one, not only for old men), the two young people would steal away into the West Chamber and watch the sun setting, which also was a dangerous amusement. Thus it will be seen poor little unprotected Margaret was in a bad way.

During all this time, the old servants of the house watched their master very closely. Even Bell had to give up the consideration of Margaret and devote herself to Sir Ludovic. And they saw many signs and tokens that they did

not like, and had many consultations whether Mr. Leslie or "the ladies" should be sent for. The ladies seemed the most natural, for the young master was known to have his business to attend to, and his family; but Bell "could not bide" calling for the ladies before their time. And Sir Ludovic was just in his ordinar; there was nothing more to be said; failing, but that was natural: nothing that anybody could take notice of. It was well to have Rob Glen at night, for that amused him; and when the Minister called, bringing his son to be re-presented to his old friend, they were glad, for Sir Ludovic was interested. When Dr. Burnside went away, he stopped at the door expressly to tell Bell how glad he was to see the old gentleman look so well.

"He's taking out a new lease," said the Doctor.

"Eh me," Bell said, looking after him, "how little sense it takes to make a minister!" But this was an utterance of hasty temper, for she had in reality an exalted respect for Dr. Burnside, both as minister and as man.

But it fell upon the house like a bomb-shell, when suddenly one morning, after being unusually well the night before, Sir Ludovic declined to get out of bed. No, he said, he was not ill, he was quite comfortable; but he did not feel disposed to get up. Old John, upon whose imagination this had an effect quite out of proportion to its apparent importance as an incident, begged and entreated almost with tears, and, finding his own remonstrances ineffectual, went to get Bell.

"I canna stand it," the old man said. "Get you him out of his bed, Bell. Pit it to me one other way, and I'll bear it; but to see him lie yonder smiling, and think of a' that's to come!"

Bell put on a clean apron and went up-stairs.

"Sir Ludovic," she said, "you're no going to bide there as if you were ill, and frighten my auld man out of his wits. Ye ken, John, he's a dour body on the outside, but within there's no a baby has a softer heart; and he canna bide to see you in your bed—nor me either!" cried the old woman, suddenly, putting up her hands to her face.

Sir Ludovic lay quite placid, with his white head upon the white pillows, his fine dark eyes full of light, and smiling. It was enough, Bell thought, to break the heart of a stone.

"And why should I get up when I am comfortable here?" said Sir Ludovic, "my good Bell. You've ruled over me so long that you think I am never to have a will of my own; and, indeed, if I do not show a spark of resolution now, when am I to show it?" he said, with a soft laugh. "There is but little time."

On this John made an inarticulate outburst, something between a sob and a groan—a roar of grief and impatience such as an animal in extremity might have uttered. He had stolen up behind his wife, not able to keep away from his old master. Bell had long been her husband's interpreter when words failed him. She dried her eyes with her apron, and turned again to the bedside.

"Sir Ludovic," she said, solemnly, "he says you'll break his heart."

"My good friend," said the old man, with a humorous twitch about his mouth, "let us be

honest. It must come some time, why shouldn't it come now? I've been trying, like the rest of you, to push it off, and pretend I did not know. Come, you are not so young yourself, to be frightened. It must come, sooner or later. What is the use of being uncomfortable, trying to keep it at arm's-length? I'm very well here. I am quite at my ease. Let us go through with it," said Sir Ludovic, with a sparkle in his eye.

"You're speaking Hebrew-Greek to me, Sir Ludovic. I canna tell no more than the babe unborn what you're going through with," cried Bell; and when she had said this she threw her apron over her head and sobbed aloud.

"Well, this is a cheerful beginning," said Sir Ludovic. "Call ye this backing of your friends? Go away, you two old fools, and send me my little Peggy; and none of your wailing to her; Bell. Leave the little thing at peace as long as that may be."

"I hope I ken my duty to Miss Margret," said Bell, with an air of offence, which was the easiest to put on in the circumstances. She hurried out of the room with hasty steps, keeping up this little fiction, and met Margaret coming down-stairs, fresh as the morning, in her light dress, with her shining hair. "You're to go to your papa, Miss Margret," said Bell, "in his ain room: where you'll find him in his bed—"

"He's not ill, Bell?" cried Margaret, with quick anxiety.

"Ill! He's just as obstinate and as ill-willy as the mule in the Scriptures," cried Bell, darting down the winding stair. She could not bear it any more than John. Margaret, standing on the spiral steps, an apparition of brightness, everything about her

"Drawn
From morning and the cheerful dawn;"

her countenance all smiling, her eyes as soft and as happy as the morning light—Bell could not see her for tears. She seemed to see the crape and blackness which so soon would envelop them all, and the deeper darkness of the world, in which this young creature would soon have no natural home. "No another moment to think upon it," Bell said to herself; "no a moment. The ladies maun come now."

Margaret, surprised, went through the long room in which, by this hour, her father's chair was always occupied, but felt no superstitions presentiment at seeing it desolate. Sir Ludovic's rooms—there were two of them, a larger and a smaller—opened off from the long room. He had taken, quite lately, as his bedchamber, the smaller room of the two, an octagon-shaped and panelled room, as being the warmest and most bright; and there he was lying, smiling as when Bell saw him first, with the morning light upon his face.

"You sent for me, papa," said Margaret. "Are you ill that you are in bed? I have never seen you in bed before."

"Remember that, then, my Peggy, as a proof of the comfortable life I have had, though I am so old. No, not ill, but very comfortable. Why should I get up and give myself a great deal of trouble, when I am so comfortable here?"

"Indeed, if you are so very comfortable—" said Margaret, a little bewildered: "it must be only laziness, papa;" and she laughed, but stopped in the middle of her laugh, and grew serious,

she could not tell why. "But it is very lazy of you," she said. "I never heard of any one who was quite well staying in bed because it was comfortable."

"No? But then there are things in heaven and earth, my Peggy, and I want you to do something for me. I want you to write a letter for me. Bring your writing things here, and I will tell you what to say."

She met John in the long room, coming in with various articles, as if to provision a place which was about to be besieged. He had some wood under his arm to light a fire, and a tray with cups and glasses, and a hot-water bottle (called in Scotland a "pig"); and there was an air of excitement about him, suppressed and sombre, which struck Margaret with vague alarm. "Why are you taking in all these things?" she said; "he did not say he was cold."

"If he doesn't want them the day, he may want them the morn," said John.

"The morn! he is not going to lie in bed always because it is comfortable; that would be too absurd," said Margaret. "What is it? There is not going to be—anything done to papa?—any—operation? What is it? You look as if there was—something coming—"

"I have my work to do," said John, hastily turning away. "I've nae time to say ay and no to little misses that canna understand."

"Oh, John, what an old bear you are!" said Margaret. He made her uneasy. It seemed as if something must have happened during the night. Was her father, perhaps, going to have a leg off, or an arm? She knew this was nonsense; but John's paraphernalia and his face both looked so. She went to the West Chamber, where all her special possessions were, and got her little writing-case, which one of her sisters had given her. Last night before she went to bed she had set up a little drawing she had done, and which she thought was more successful than any hitherto attempted. She had set it up so that she might see it the first thing in the morning, to judge how it bore the light of day. And on the table was Rob's block with the sketch he had made of Sir Ludovic in his chair. He was to come again that very day, with her father's consent, to go on with it. All this looked somehow, she could not tell how, a long way off to Margaret, as if something had happened to set these simple plans aside. She felt, in the jargon of her new art, as if the foreground had suddenly grown into such importance that all that was behind it was thrown miles back. It was very strange; and yet nothing had happened, only her father was lazy, and had not got out of bed.

"Who is it for? And am I to write from myself, papa, or am I to write for you?" she said, sitting down at the bedside and opening her writing-case. He paused, and looked at her for a moment before he spoke.

"It is to your sisters, to Jean and Grace, my little Peggy."

"To Jean and Grace!"

"To ask them, if it is quite convenient, to come here now, instead of waiting till September, according to their general custom—"

"Oh, papa!" cried Margaret, suddenly realizing the change that was coming in her life; the sketches and the drawing-lessons, and the talks, and the confidences, and Rob Glen him-

self—What would Jean and Grace say to Rob? She felt as if in a moment all her little structure of amusement and pleasure was falling to pieces. She closed her writing-case again with a gesture of despair. "Oh, papa, is not September soon enough? I don't want them here now. In—the summer," said Margaret, hastily, blushing for herself at the little subtle subterfuge to which she was resorting to conceal her real terror—"in the summer there is always something—I mean so many things to do."

"Yes," her father said, with a smile; "and for some of us, my little girl, things we shall never do again."

She did not realize the meaning of this, and perhaps Margaret may be pardoned if, not knowing the sadder circumstances involved, her mind was for the moment absorbed in her own disappointment and confusion; the sudden sense of arrest and stoppage in all her pleasant ways which overwhelmed her. "Why do you want them, papa?" she went on; "am I not enough? You used to say you liked me best. You used to say, just you and me, you and me, got on best in the old house."

"And so I would say still," said the old man, "my little Peggy, my bonnie Peggy! Yes, it is enough to have you and me. (I forgive you the grammar.) But however selfish I might be were there only myself to think of, I must think now of you, my little girl."

"And what is about me?" cried Margaret; "if you think I want Jean and Grace, papa, what will they do but find fault? They are never satisfied with anything we do. They find fault with everybody. They say John is stupid—"

"And so he is, a doited old body—and, my Peggy, sometimes very far from civil to you."

"Old John, papa? To me? He is as fond of me as if I were his own. When he scolds, I don't pay any attention, any more than when you scold."

Sir Ludovic laughed.

"That is a pretty way of telling me how little authority I have," he said.

"Papa!" cried Margaret, impatiently, "you know very well that is not what I mean. I would not vex you, not for the world—never you—and not even John. I cannot bear him to be called names, and everything found fault with. There's not this and there's not that; no drawing-room; and the bedrooms are not big enough, and me not well enough dressed."

"Perhaps they are right there, my Peggy. I fear you are dressed anyhow, though I see nobody that looks so well."

"Then why must they come before September?" said Margaret. "Let them come, papa, at their own time."

He laughed a little, lying there upon the white pillow, with a delicate hue of life in his old cheek, and all the vigor of twenty in his dark eyes. He did not look as if there was anything the matter with him. He only looked comfortable, luxuriously comfortable, that was all. She laughed, too, as she looked at him. "How lazy you are, papa!" she said; "do you think it is right? What would Bell say to me if I did not get up? You look so comfortable—and so happy."

"Yes, very comfortable," he said; but the laugh went off his face. "My Peggy," he went

on, with sudden gravity, "don't ask any questions, but write to your sisters. Say I wish them to come, and to come now. No more, my dear, no more. I am not joking. Say I will look for them as soon as they can get here."

She opened her writing-book again, and got her paper, and began to write. When he took this tone, there was nothing to be done but to obey. But when she had written a few lines, Margaret stopped suddenly with a little start, as if all at once overtaken by a sense of the meaning of what she was doing. "Papa," she cried, the color leaving her face, two big tears starting into her eyes, "you are hiding something from me: you are ill!"

"No, no," he said—"no, I am not at all ill; but, my Peggy, one never knows what may be going to happen, and I want to have your sisters here."

"Oh," cried Margaret, throwing away her book, "let them stay away—let them stay away! I want you all to myself. I can take care of you better than they can. Papa, I know you are ill, though you will not own it."

"No, no," he said, more feebly. "Run away and play, my little girl. I am—tired, just a trifle tired: and come back in half an hour, in half an hour, before post-time."

"Here's a cordial to ye, Sir Ludovic," said John; and he made an imperative sign to his young mistress. "Let him be—let him be! he's no weel enough to be teased about anything," he whispered in her ear.

Margaret stood gazing at her father for a moment thunderstruck. Then she snatched up the letter she had begun, and rushed rapidly, yet on noiseless feet, out of the room. Oh, old John was cruel! Would she do anything to tease her father? And, oh! *he* was cruel not to tell her—to wish for Jean and Grace, and to hide it from her. She went down-stairs like the wind, her feet scarcely touching the steps, making a brightness in the dim light of the stair, and a movement in the stillness, to go to Bell, her referee in everything, and to ask what it meant. "Oh, Bell, what does it mean?" was on her lips; when suddenly, through the open door, Margaret saw two figures approaching, and stopped short. They were young men both, both pleasant to behold; but even at that agitated moment, and in the suddenness of the apparition, the girl observed the difference between them without knowing that she observed it. The difference was to the disadvantage of Rob, on whose behalf all her prepossessions were engaged; and this gave her a faint pang, the cause of which she was at the moment quite unconscious of. "Oh!" she cried, not able to restrain her little outcry of trouble, as she met their surprised and questioning looks—"oh, papa is ill; I think he is very ill; and I don't know what to do."

The second of the visitors was Randal Burnside, who had met Rob Glen at the door; and it was he who answered first, eagerly, "I passed Dr. Hume's carriage on the road, at a cottage door. Shall I go back and tell him to come here?"

"Oh, will you?" cried Margaret, two big tears trembling out with a great splash, like big rain-drops, from her anxious eyes. "Oh, will you? That is what I want most."

He did not stop to tell his errand, or to receive any greeting or acknowledgment, but turned, with his hat in his hand, and sped away. Rob had said nothing; he only stood gazing at her wistfully, and took her hand when the other was gone. "I see what is the matter," he said, tenderly; "is there anything new? is there any cause for fear?"

In her excitement, Margaret was not like herself. The touch and the tone of tenderness seemed to go through her with a strange, almost guilty, sense of consolation; and yet she was angry that it was not he who had gone to serve her practically. She drew her hand away, frightened, angry, yet not displeased. "Why did you let him go?" she cried, with a reproach that said more than confession.

Rob's face brightened and glowed all over. "I wanted to stay with you and comfort you," he said; "I can think of no one else when you are in trouble. Come in and rest, and tell me what it is. You must not overdo yourself. You must not suffer. I want to take care of you!"

"Oh, what is about me?" said Margaret. But she suffered herself to be persuaded, and went with him up to the West Chamber to tell him how it all was.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MRS. BELLINGHAM and Miss Leslie arrived as soon as convenient trains could bring them. The summons which Margaret wrote later that day, taking down her father's message from his lips, was not instant, though as decided as he could make it without too much alarming the girl, whose nerves were shaken, and who sat and gazed at him with a wistful countenance, large-eyed and dismal, watching every look. When he spoke to her, her eyes filled, and she did not seem able to keep that anxious gaze from his face. But the doctor, when he came, was more consoling than alarming. There was nothing to be frightened about, he said, scolding Margaret, paternally. And by degrees the household calmed down and accepted the new state of affairs, and began to think it natural that Sir Ludovic should have taken to his bed. His son came and paid him a visit from Edinburgh, staying a single night, and sitting for a solemn hour or two by his father's bedside, though he did not say much. "Is there anything I can do for you, sir?" he asked, and begged that he might be written to daily with news of his father's state, though he could find so little to say to him. But the visit of Mr. Leslie was not nearly so important as that of "the ladies," to which everybody looked forward with excitement. They arrived in the afternoon, having slept in Edinburgh the previous night. Just at the right moment they arrived, at the hour which is most proper for the arrival of a visitor at a country house, leaving just time enough to dress for dinner. And they came in with a rustle of silk into Sir Ludovic's octagon room, where there was scarcely room for them, and gave him each a delicate kiss, filling the place with delicate odors.

"I hope you are a little better, dear papa," Grace said; and Mrs. Jean, who was large and

round, and scarcely could pass between the bed and the wall, cried out cheerily that it was a relief to her mind to see him looking so well.

"I never should have found out he was ill at all, if I had not been told," Mrs. Bellingham said, whose voice was pitched higher than that of the others. Sir Ludovic greeted them kindly, and allowed them to put their faces against his for a moment without disturbing himself.

"Yes, I told you—I am very comfortable," he said to Margaret, who stood behind, very eager to see what impression her father's appearance would make on her sisters. She was very happy, poor child, to hear those cheerful words from Mrs. Bellingham's high-pitched voice.

"Well, papa, now we have seen you, and I feel quite happy about you, we will go and make ourselves comfortable too," said Mrs. Bellingham. "I hope you have a cup of tea for us, Margaret, after our journey? and you must come and pour it out, for I want to look at you. Papa will spare you a little. John is waiting in the next room, I see."

"John will do very well," said Sir Ludovic; "don't derange yourselves, my dears, from your usual habits for me."

"I assure you, dear papa," said Grace, "I do not care at all for being put out of my usual habits. I will stay with you. What is there in comparison with a dear father's wishes? You go, dearest Jean; I am sure you want some tea, and I will stay with dear papa. I can see in his eyes," she added, in an audible undertone, pushing her sister gently toward the door, "that he wishes me to stay."

"My dear," said Sir Ludovic, "you must not begin your self-sacrifices as soon as you enter the house. I am looking quite well, as you both say. There is no reason why you shouldn't have your tea in peace. My eyes are very deceitful if they say anything about it except what I have said. Go, and make yourselves quite comfortable."

"Come, come," said Mrs. Bellingham. "This is just your usual nonsense; of course papa likes his old John, whom he can order about as he pleases, better than you in that old silk that makes such a noise. We shall come and sit with papa after dinner; good-bye for the moment," she said, kissing the tips of her fingers. Sir Ludovic laughed to himself softly as they disappeared. They came back every year with all their little peculiarities unchanged, all their little vanities and *minauderies*—Grace self-sacrificing, Jean sensible. They were so little like his children that he could laugh at their foibles without any harshness, but without any pain. The constant reappearance of these two ladies, always falling into their little genteel comedy as they entered the room, exactly at the point where, on the previous year, they left it off, made the interval of time appear as if it had never been. John, who was coming in with one of the many additional adjuncts to comfort which he was always bringing, caught the sound of the laugh. John did not know if he approved of a laugh from a dying man, but he could not help joining in with a faint chuckle.

"The ladies, Sir Ludovic, are aye just the same, a' their little ways," he said.

Meanwhile Margaret followed them in a little flutter of excitement. She had not wanted them

to come; but now that they were here, the novelty was always agreeable, and she had been grateful to them for thinking so well of Sir Ludovic's looks, which by dint of anxiety and watching she had ceased to be satisfied with. Bell, who knew the ways and the wants of the ladies, had sent up tea to the West Chamber, whither they went, giving a sensation of company and fulness to the quiet old house. The other voices in Earl's-hall had a different sound; they were lower, softer, with a little of the chant and modulation which belongs to Fife, and did not make the air tingle as Mrs. Bellingham did. Even down-stairs the women-servants could trace the movements of the new-comers by the flow of what was chiefly a monologue on the part of the elder lady. Miss Leslie had no objection to take her share; but Mrs. Bellingham had most boldness and most perseverance, and left little room for any one else. "Hear to her lang tongue," Bell said; "high English, and as sharp as the clipping of a pair of shears." It ran on from Sir Ludovic's dressing-room, through the long room, which was so vacant, and which Margaret could scarcely go through without tears.

"I wish papa would have been advised about this room, it might have been made so much more comfortable. A partition where that screen is would have given a real dining-room and library, instead of this ridiculous long wilderness. Oh, Margaret, why do you leave that huge old chair standing out there, to break one's legs against? It should be put back out of the way," said Mrs. Bellingham, advancing her hand to put aside the chair.

"Oh, stop, stop! It is papa's chair; it must not be moved!"

"Ah, to be sure, it is papa's chair," said Mrs. Bellingham. She stood and looked at it for a moment, with her head on one side. "Well, do you know it is touching, this? Poor papa! I remember he always sat here. It is affecting, like a soldier's sword and his horse. But, my dear little Margaret, my poor child, you cannot leave it always here blocking up the way."

"Dear papa's chair!" said Miss Grace, putting her hand caressingly upon it; and then she touched the back with her cheek, as she had touched Sir Ludovic's face. "Poor dear old chair! never again to be what it has been, never again—"

"Yes, poor old thing, I should not like to see it sent away to a lumber-room," said Mrs. Bellingham. "But there will be so many changes, that it is sad to contemplate! Now, Margaret, tell me all about it: how was he seized? You did not say anything about a fit, and he does not look as if there had been any fit. No sugar for me, dear. Were you with him when it happened? or how did it come on? We must know all this, you know, before we see the doctor. I shall make it a point of going fully over the case with the doctor. One knows then what we have to expect, and how long a course it is likely to run."

"Jean!" cried Margaret, aghast with grief and horror; "I thought you thought he was looking well! You said you would not have known there was anything the matter. You said—"

"My dear child, did you expect me to tell him that I saw death in his face? Is that the

sort of thing, do you think, to let the patient know? Do you expect me to say to him—Good gracious, child! what is the matter? What are you going to do?"

"You must pour out your tea for yourselves," said Margaret; "I am going to papa. Oh, if you think he is so ill, how can you sit and take your tea?—How can you sit down and talk, and tell him you will come after dinner, as if it was nothing? You cannot mean it!" said the poor girl, "you cannot mean it! Oh! how can *you* tell, that have seen him only once? The doctor thinks he will soon be well again; and Ludovic—Ludovic is as old as you are—he never said a word to me."

"Ludovic thought you were too young to be told; he thought it was best for us to come first; and there are some doctors that will never tell you the truth. I don't hold with that. I would not blurt it out to the patient to affect his spirits, but I would tell the family always. Now, Margaret, you must not go to papa with that crying face. Sit down and compose yourself. He is very well; he has got old John. You don't suppose that I am looking for anything immediate—"

"Take this; it will do you good," said Miss Leslie, forcing upon Margaret her own cup of tea. "I will pour out another for myself."

Margaret put it away from her with outstretched hands. She turned from them with an anguish of disgust and impatience which Jean and Grace had done nothing to deserve, feeling only the justice of that one advice not to go to her father with her countenance convulsed with weeping. But where could she go? She had been frightened, and had recovered from her fright; had taken comfort from what the doctor said, and joyful consolation from the comments of her sisters on the old man's appearance; but where was she to seek any comfort now? With her heart sick, and fluttering, tingling, with the stroke she had received so unexpectedly, the girl turned to the window, where at least she could conceal her "crying face," and stood there gazing out, seeing nothing, stunned with sudden misery, and not knowing what to do. But the intolerable pain into which she had been plunged all at once did not deaden her faculties. Though her mind was in such commotion, she could not help hearing all that went on behind her. Jean and Grace were quite free from any bewilderment of pain. They were glad to have their tea after their journey, and they discussed everything with a little excitement and expectation, just touched by solemnity. To be thus summoned to their father's death-bed, to be placed in the foremost places at this tragic act which was about to be accomplished, themselves sharing in the importance of it, and with a claim upon the sympathy and respect of the world in consequence, gave Jean and Grace a sense of solemn dignity. When the heart is not deeply affected, and when, indeed, your connection with the dying is, as it were, an official one, it is difficult not to feel thus advanced in moral importance by attendance on a death-bed. It was Miss Leslie who felt this most.

"How sad to think of poor dearest papa on that bed from which he will never rise!" she said, shaking her head; "and when one remembers how active he used to be! But we

have nothing to murmur at. He has been spared to us for so many years—"

"What are you thinking of, Grace?" said Mrs. Bellingham. "I am older than you are, but I never can remember a time when papa was active; and, to be sure, he is an old man, but not half so old as grandpapa, whom I recollect quite distinctly. *He* was active, if you like."

"At such a time, dearest Jean, why should we dispute about words? Of course, you are right; I am always making mistakes," said Miss Grace; "but all the same, we have no right to complain. Many, many years we have had him longer than numbers of people I could mention. Indeed, to have a father living is rare at our time of life."

"That's true, at least," said Mrs. Bellingham. "I hope you are not going to keep on that dress. I told you in Edinburgh that a silk gown with a train was preposterous to travel in, and it is quite impossible for a sick-room. I shall put on a soft merino, that does not make any noise. Merino is never too warm, even in the height of summer, at Earl's-hall."

"I have nothing but black, and I could not put on black to hurt poor papa's feelings," said Grace. "He would think we were getting our mourning already. Indeed, when you think how long we will have to wear it without putting it on a day too soon—"

"As if he would remark what you are wearing! But I must go and see that Steward has unpacked. It is true there will be black enough before we are done with it, and once in mourning, I always say you never can tell when you may take it off," said Mrs. Bellingham; "but I will not let you come into the sick-room in that rustling dress. He was always fidgety at the best of times. He would not put up with it. There's your muslins, if you are not afraid of taking cold; but I won't have silk," said the elder sister, peremptory and decided.

Miss Leslie came to Margaret, and put an arm round her where she stood at the window, as the other went away.

"Dearest child, you must not cry so," she said. "He is not suffering, you know. What a blessing that there is no pain, that he is comfortable, as he says. Dear Jean seems to be a little hard, but she means it very well; and now that we are here, you will be able to rest; you will not have so much responsibility."

"Oh, do you think I want to rest? am I thinking of myself? It is because you are all wrong—you are mistaken. The doctor did not say so. It is not true!"

Miss Leslie shook her head, and gave a little moan.

"Dearest child!" she said, putting her cheek against Margaret's wet and tear-stained cheek. "But I must go and see about my things too," she said. "Steward never thinks of me till she has done everything for Jean. I am very glad of that, of course; it is just what I like; but it gives me a little more to do. Come with me, dear, and tell me what to put on. It will amuse you a little to see my things, though I haven't got anything new—not a thing all this year. You see, dear Ludie told us of dearest papa's uncertain state of health, and what was the good? There is nothing more provoking than having got a supply of colored things just before

a long mourning. Alas! it is bad enough without that," said Grace, with a deep sigh.

After they had made their toilet, the ladies dined, and not without appetite, while Margaret sat unable to swallow a morsel, unable to escape to her father's room for the tears which she could not suppress. In the mean time it was Bell that had taken the place of watcher. Bell's heart was heavy too; but she exerted herself to amuse her patient, to tell him all the circumstances of his daughters' arrival.

"They've but a box apiece," said Bell, "and that's wonderful for our ladies. But they've minded this time that it's not that easy to get trunks up our stairs. They've minded and they've no minded, Sir Ludovic: for Mrs. Bellin'am's is that big that no mortal, let alone John, could get it up the stair. Her woman has had a' the things to carry up in armfu's. And oh, the heap o' things a leddy wants when she gangs about! It's just a bondage—gowns for the mornin' and gowns for the evenin', and gowns to put on when she's dressing hersel', and as many fykes of laces and collars, and caps for her head—if they ca' thae vanities caps."

Sir Ludovic laughed.

"Poor Jean and poor Grace!" he said. "I hope they think mourning is becoming to them, Bell, for they will not stint me of a ribbon; I know my daughters too well for that. They will give me everything that is due to me, to the very last scrap of erape."

"They'll do that, Sir Ludovic," said Bell, divided between her desire to humor him and her wish to keep off painful subjects; "the ladies have never shown any want o' respect. But Miss Grace was aye fond of bright colors. They're no so young as I mind them, but they're weel-faured women still. The Leslies were aye a handsome family. They take it from yourself, Sir Ludovic, if I may make so bold."

"Not entirely from me," said Sir Ludovic, with a smile. He did not dislike the allusion to his good looks, even though he was dying. "Their mother, whom you scarcely remember, was a handsome woman. We were not a bad-looking couple, people said. Ah! that's a long time ago, Bell."

"Deed and it's a long time, Sir Ludovic;" but Bell did not know what to say on this subject, for the interpolation of a third Lady Leslie no doubt made the matter somewhat more difficult. Probably this struck Sir Ludovic too, and he was in the condition when human nature is glad to seek a little help from another, or sympathy at least, no help being possible. This time he sighed—which was a thing much more befitting than laughter on a dying bed.

"That's a strange subject altogether," he said; "any meeting after so long a time would be strange. If she had been at one end of the world and I at the other, there would be many changes even then. Would we understand each other?" Sir Ludovic had ceased to speak to Bell. He was musing alone, talking with himself. "And the difference must be greater than any mortal separation. Know each other? Of course we must know each other, she and I; but the question is, will we understand each other?"

"Eh, Sir Ludovic," said Bell, "it was God's will that parted you, not your ain. There would be fault on one side or the other, if my lady had

been in, say America, a' this time, and you at hame; but she's been in—heaven; that makes a' the difference."

"Does it?" he said; "that's just what I want to be sure of, Bell. Time has made great changes on me. If I find her just where she was when she left me, I have gone long beyond that; and if she has gone on too, where is she? and how shall we meet, each with our new experiences which the other does not know?"

Bell was very much perplexed by this inquiry. It had not occurred to her own mind. "Eh, Sir Ludovic," she said, "I am no the one, the like o' me, to clear up sic mysteries. But what new things can the lady meet with in heaven, but just the praise o' God and the love o' God? and that doesna distract the mind."

"Ah, Bell! but I've met with a great many more things since I parted with her; and then," he said, with a gleam in his eyes which might have been half comic in its embarrassment had the circumstances been different, "there is—my little Peggy's mother, poor thing."

Bell sat down, in her confusion and bewilderment, by the bedside, and pondered. "I'm thinking," she said, "that my late leddy, Miss Margaret's mother, will be the one that will maist cling to ye when a's done."

"Poor little thing!" he said, softly, with a smile on his face—"poor little thing! She should have seen me safe out of the world, and then had a life of her own. That would have made a balance; but how are we to know what my wife thinks? You see, we know nothing—we know nothing. And it is very hard to tell, when people have been parted so long, and things have happened, how they are to get on when they meet again."

(Sir Ludovic, perhaps, was a little confused in his mind as to which of the Ladies Leslie he meant when he said "my wife;" but at all events it was not the last one, the "poor little thing," Margaret's mother, who was to him as a child.)

"Sir Ludovic, there's neither marrying nor giving in marriage there," said Bell, solemnly. It had never occurred to herself certainly that old John would not form part of her paradise; but then there was no complication in their relations. "And you maunna think of things like that," she added, reverently, "eh, Sir Ludovic? There's One we should a' think of. And if He's pleased, what does it matter for anything else in the wide world?"

"Ay, Bell; that's very true, Bell," he said, acquiescing, though scarcely remarking what she said. But the dying will rarely see things with the solemnity which the living feel to be appropriate to their circumstances, neither does the approach of death concentrate our thoughts on our most important concerns, as we all fondly hope it may, without difficulty or struggle. "I would like to know—what my wife thinks," he said.

"What are you talking so much about?" said Mrs. Bellingham, coming in. "I heard your tongues going all the time of dinner. Is that you, Bell? How are you, Bell? I was wondering not to have seen you before; but I don't think you should let papa talk so much when he is so weak. Indeed, I don't think you should talk, papa. It is always exhausting your

strength. Just lie quiet and keep quite still, till you get your strength back."

Sir Ludovic turned round and looked at Bell with a glimmer of fun, about which this time there could be no mistake, in his eyes. Bell did not know what it meant. She did not see any fun in Mrs. Bellingham's orders, nor in the way in which she herself was speedily, noiselessly displaced from the position she had taken. But so it was. Bell was put out of the way very innocently and naturally, and, with a soft flood of unrustling merino about her, Mrs. Bellingham took possession. She made no sound; she was quite fresh in dress, in looks, in spirits.

"I have made Margaret tell me all about how it came on, and cheered her up, the silly little thing. She has never seen any illness; she is like to cry if you only look at her. But we must make her more practical," said the elder sister. Grace was in a blue gown with rose-colored ribbons. She came in, stealing with noiseless feet, a much slimmer shadow than her sister, and bent over the bed, and put her cheek to Sir Ludovic's again, and kissed his hand and murmured, "Dearest papa!" If he had been in the article of death Sir Ludovic must have laughed.

But Margaret did not appear. She could not present herself with her swollen eyes and pale cheeks. Oh! if Jean and Grace had but stayed away—had they but left him to herself, to Bell, and John, who loved him! But she could not creep into her corner in her father's room while the ladies were there, filling it up, taking possession of him. Her heart was as heavy as lead in her bosom; it lay there like a stone. People will sometimes speak of the heart as if it were a figure of speech. Margaret felt hers lying, broken, bleeding, heavy—a weight that bent her to the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARGARET roamed about the house, unable to take any comfort or find any. Jeanie found her crying in the long room when she went to remove the remains of the dinner; for John had a hundred things to do, and showed his excitement by an inability to keep to his ordinary work.

"Oh, Miss Margret, dinna be so cast down!" Jeanie said, with tender sympathy, brushing the tears from her own eyes.

"What can I be but cast down," she cried, "when papa is— Oh, Jeanie, what does Bell say? Does Bell think he is—" Dying, the girl meant to say, but to pronounce the word was impossible to her.

"Oh, Miss Margret," said Jeanie; "what does it matter what Bell says; how can she ken? and the doctor he says quite different—"

This was a betrayal of all that Margaret had feared; Bell, too, was then of the same opinion. The poor girl stole to the door of her father's room, and stood there for a moment listening to the easy flow of Mrs. Bellingham's dogmas, and Grace's sigh of "Dearest papa!" and she heard him laugh, and say something in his own natural tone. Would he laugh if he were—dying?

"Come in, Miss Margret," said John, coming through the dressing-room, this time with

some extra pillows (for he might want to have his head higher, John thought).

"Oh, I cannot—I cannot bear it!" cried Margaret, turning away. He put his large old hand softly upon her arm.

"My bonnie leddy!" he said. He would not have said it, Margaret felt, if there had been any hope. Then she went out in her despair, restless, not knowing where to seek relief from the pain in her heart, which was so sore, and which could not be shaken off. She said to herself that she could not bear it. It was her first experience of the intolerable. The fine weather had broken which had so favored the drawing, and the wind was moaning about the old house, prophesying rain. With another pang in her heart—not that she was thinking of Rob, but only of the contrast between that light-heartedness and her present despair, she stumbled through the potato furrows, past the place where she had spent so many pleasant hours, thinking no evil—though the evil she remembered must have been in existence all the same—and made her way into the wood. There was shelter there, and no one would see her. The trees were all vocal with those sighings of melancholy cadence that are never long absent from the Scotch fir-woods. The wind came sweeping over them, with one great sigh after another, like the waves of the sea: and she sighed, too, in heaviness. Oh, if she could but sigh deep enough, like the wind, to get that burden off her breast! Margaret sat down on a damp knoll, with all the firs rising up round her like a congregation of shadows, and the wind sweeping with long complaint, sadder and sadder over their melancholy branches: and gazed at the gray old house through her tears. How different it had looked in the morning sunshine, with her father sitting among his books, and no evil near! All the color and light had gone out of it now; it was gray as death, pale, solemn—the old tower and gables rising against a sky scarcely less gray than they were, the trees swaying wildly about, the clouds rolling together in masses across the colorless sky.

It was not a time or a place to cheer any one. All the severity of aspect, which melts so completely out of a Scotch landscape with the shining of the sun, had come out in fullest force. The trees looked darker in their leafage, the house paler in its grayness, than houses and trees are anywhere else. But Margaret did not make any comparisons. She knew no landscape half so well. She was not disposed to find fault with it, or wish it more lovely. And for this moment she was not thinking of the landscape, but of what was going on in that room, where she could see a little glimmer of fire-light at the window. Both John and Bell thought it natural and seemingly, when there was illness in the house, that there should be a fire. Dying! oh, the chill and mysterious terror of the word; lying there smiling, but soon, perhaps at any moment, Margaret thought, in her inexperience, to be gone out of reach, out of sight! he who had always been at hand to be appealed to in every difficulty, to be greeted morning and evening! he who was always smiling at her, "making a fool of her," as she had so often complained. Perhaps there is no desolation so complete as the shrinking and gasp of the young soul when it first comes thus

within sight, within realization, of death. If it had been she who had to die, Margaret would not have found it so hard. She would have been ineffably, childishly, consoled by the thought of the flowers with which she would be covered, and the weeping of "all the house," and the broken hearts of those whom she would leave behind; but nothing of this comforted her now. For the first time in her life, misery took hold upon her—a thing that would not be shaken off, could not be staved aside. She sat at the foot of the big fir-tree, gazing with wide eyes at the gray old house which was like her father, who was dying. The tears gathered and fell, minute by minute, from her eyes, blinding her, then showing clearer than ever, as they fell, the old pale outline, the ruddy glimmer in that window where he was lying. Why did she not rush to him, to be with him every moment that remained? But she could not bear it. She could not go and watch for *that* coming. To have it over, to get through the unimaginable anguish anyhow, at any cost, seemed the best thing, the only thing that remained for her. She had not heard any one coming, being too much rapt in her own thoughts to pay attention to what was going on around her; and indeed the moaning of the trees and the sweep of the wind were enough to silence all other sounds.

Thus Margaret was taken entirely by surprise, when a well-known voice over her head suddenly addressed her.

"Miss Margaret!" Rob Glen said. He was greatly surprised and very glad, having heard of the arrival, which he feared would put a stop to the possibility of his visits. But then he added, in anxious tones, "What is the matter? you are crying. What has happened?" He thought, so miserable were her looks, that Sir Ludovic was dead, and it was with a natural impulse of tenderness and pity that the young man suddenly knelt down beside her and took her hand quietly between his own.

"Oh no," said Margaret, with a sob; "not that, not yet! but they tell me—they tell me—" She could not go any farther for tears.

Rob did not say anything, but he put his lips to her hand, and looked anxiously in her face. Margaret could not look at him again—could not speak. She was blind and inarticulate with tears. She only knew that he wept too, and that seemed to make them one.

"Did you hear *that*?" she said; "is that what everybody says? I think it will kill me too!"

Rob Glen had no premeditated plan. His heart ached for her, so desolate, so young, under the moaning firs. He put his arm round her unconsciously, holding her fast.

"Oh, my poor darling!" he said, "my love! I would die to keep any trouble from *you*!"

Margaret was entirely overpowered with the sorrow and the sympathy. She leaned her head upon him unawares; she felt his arm support her, and that there was a vague comfort in it. She cried and sobbed without any attempt to restrain herself. No criticism was here, no formal consolations, nothing to make her remember that now she was a woman, and must not abandon herself like a child to her misery. He only wept with her, and after a while began to kiss her hair and her pale cheeks, murmuring over her, "My Margaret, my poor darling!" She did not

hear or heed what he said. She was conscious of nothing but anguish, with a vague, faint relief in it, a lessening of the burden, a giving way of the iron band that had seemed to be about her heart.

When this passion of weeping was spent, the evening had fallen into dusk. The house had become grayer, paler than ever; the glimmer of the window more red; the trees about were like ghosts, looming indistinctly through the gloom; and Rob was kneeling by her with his arms round her, her head pillowed against him, his face close to hers. There did not seem anything strange in it to poor Margaret. He was very, very kind; he had wept, too, breaking his heart like her; it seemed all so natural, so simple. And she was a little relieved, a little consoled.

"Darling," he was saying, "I don't think it can be quite true. The doctor would not deceive me, and he did not say so. Who should know best—they who have just come, or we who have been here all the time? Oh, my sweet, don't break your dear heart!—that would break mine too. I don't think it can be so bad as they say."

"Oh, do you think so? do you think there is any hope?" said Margaret.

This gave her strength to stir a little, to move from the warm shelter in which she found herself. But he kept her close to him with a gentle pressure of his arm.

"Yes, let us hope," he said; "he is not so old, and he is not very ill. You told me he was not suffering—"

"No—he ought to know better than they do; he said he was not ill. Oh, I do not think it can be so bad," said Margaret, raising herself up, "and you—don't think so, Mr. Glen?"

"Do you call me Mr. Glen *still*?" he said, with his lips close to her ear. "Oh, my darling, don't tempt me to wish harm to Sir Ludovic. If I may only comfort you when you are in trouble—if I am to be nothing to you when you are happy—"

"Oh!" said Margaret, with a deep sigh, "do you think I am happy yet? I am not quite so wretched, perhaps; but I shall never be happy till papa is out of danger, till he is well again, sitting in his chair with his books. Oh, you do not say anything now! You think that will never be—"

"And I working at my drawing," he said. He did not want to deceive her, and his voice was husky; but he could not do other than humor her, whatever shape her fancy might take.

"I finishing my drawing, and making it more like him; and my sweet Margaret sitting by me, not trying to escape from me: and her kind father giving us his blessing—"

"Oh," Margaret cried, starting away from him, "it is quite dark, it is quite late, Mr. Glen."

"Yes, darling," he said, rising reluctantly, "I must take you in now; it is too cold and too late for you, though it has been better than the brightest day to me."

"I thought you were sorry for me," said Margaret. "I thought you were unhappy too. Oh, were you only glad because I was in trouble, Mr. Glen?"

There was a poignant tone of pain in the question which encouraged Rob. He caught

her hand in his, and drew it through his arm and held her fast.

"You don't know," he said, "because you are so young, and love is new to you. You don't know that a man can be happy in his worst misery if it brings him close, close to the girl he loves."

Margaret did not say a word. She did not understand: but yet did not she feel, too, a vague bliss that overwhelmed her in the midst of her sorrow? The relief that had stolen over her, was it real hope, or only a vague sense that all must be well because something had come into her life which made her happy? She was willing to go with Rob, when he led her, the long way round, through the wood, and by the other side of the house. He did not want to be circumscribed in his good-night by the possible inspection of old John or Bell. "This is the best way for you," he said, leading her very tenderly along the margin of the wood. All the way he talked to her in a whisper, saying, Margaret could not tell what, caressing words that were sweet, though she did not realize the meaning of them; nor did she in the least resist his "kindness." She suffered him to hold her hand and kiss it, and call her all the tender names he could think of. It seemed all quite natural. She was half stunned by her sorrow, half intoxicated by this strange sweet opiate of tender reassurances and impassioned love. It did not occur to her to make any response, but neither did she repulse him. She trembled with the strangeness and the naturalness, the consolation, the tremor; but her mind was so much confused between pain and relief that she could not realize what this new thing was.

They had come round to the door in the court-yard wall, which was the chief entrance to the house, and here Rob reluctantly parted with her, saying a hundred good-byes, and venturing again, ere he let her go, to kiss her cheek. Margaret was much more startled now than she had been before, and made haste to draw her hands from his. Then she heard him utter a little sharp, short exclamation, and he tried to hold her back. But she was not thinking of spectators. She stepped on through the doorway, which was open, and came straight upon some one who was coming out. It did not occur to her to think that he had seen this parting, or what he had seen. She did not look at the stranger at all, but went on hurriedly into the court-yard. Rob had dropped her hand as if it had been a stone. This surprised her a little, but nothing else. Any necessity for concealment, any fear of being seen, had not entered into Margaret's confused and troubled mind, troubled with more than grief now, with a kind of bewilderment, caused by this something new which had come upon her unawares, and which she did not understand.

The two young men stood together outside. There was no possibility of mistake, or chance that they might be unable to recognize each other. There had been a moment's intense suspense, and then Randal Burnside, coming out from his evening inquiries after Sir Ludovic, had discovered, in spite of himself, the discomfited and abashed lover. Randal's surprise was mingled with a momentary pang of disappointment and pain to think so young a creature as Margaret,

and so sweet a creature, should have thus been found returning from a walk with, evidently, her lover, and capable of dalliance at such a moment, when her father was dying. It hurt his ideal sense of what was fit. He had scarcely renewed his childish acquaintance with her, and had no right to be disappointed. What did it matter to him whom she walked with, or what was the fashion of her wooing? But it wounded him to class this delicate Margaret with the village lasses and their "lads." He tried not to look at the fellow, not to surprise her secret. Heaven knows, he had no desire to surprise anybody's secret, much less such a vulgar one as this. But his eyes were quicker than his will, and he had seen Rob Glen before he was aware. This gave him a greater shock still. He stared with a kind of consternation, then gave his old acquaintance a hasty nod, and went on much disturbed, though why he should be disturbed he could not tell. She was nothing to him—why should he mind? Poor girl, she had been neglected; there had been no one to train her, to tell what a lady should do. But Randal felt vexed as if she had been his sister, that Margaret had not known by instinct how a lady should behave. He went on more quickly than usual to drive it out of his mind.

But Rob had the consciousness of guilt in him, and could not take it so lightly. He thought Randal would betray him; no doubt Randal had it in his power to betray him; and, on the whole, it might be better to guard the discovered secret by a confidence. He went hastily after the other, making his way among the trees; but he had called him two or three times before Randal could be got to stop. When at last he did so, he turned round with a half-angry "Well!" Randal did not want the confidence; he did not care to play the part of convenient friend to such a hero; he was angry to find himself in circumstances which obliged him to listen to an explanation. Rob came panting after him through the gathering dark.

"Mr. Burnside," he said, breathless, "I must speak to you. I am sure you could not help seeing who it was that went in as you came out, or what was between her and me." Rob could not help a movement of pride, a little dilation and expansion of his breast.

"I had no wish to notice anything, or any one," Randal said; "pray believe me that I never pry into things which are no business of mine."

"I am sure you are the soul of honor," said Rob, "but it is better you should know the circumstances. Don't think she had come out to meet me. She had been driven out by despair about her father, and I was in the wood by chance—I declare to you, by chance. I might have gone there to see the light in her window, that was all. But she did not come with any idea of meeting me."

"This is quite unnecessary," said Randal; "I expressed no opinion, and have no right to form one. I didn't want to see, and I don't want to know—"

"I perceive, however," said Rob, "that you do not approve of me, and won't approve of me; that you think I had no right to do what I have done, to speak to Mar—"

"Hold your tongue," said Randal, savagely;

"what do you mean by bringing in a lady's name?"

Rob blushed to his very shoes; that he should have done a thing which evidently some private rule in that troublesome unwritten code of a gentleman, which it was so difficult to master in all its details, forbade, was worse to him than a crime. The annoyance with which he felt this took away his resentment at Randal's tone.

"Of course you are right," he said; "I made a mistake; but, Mr. Burnside, you must not judge us too harshly. We have been thrown in each other's way all day long, and almost every day. They have allowed us to be together so much, that we were encouraged to go a little farther. And she was very unhappy," he added, with a little tremor in his voice; "not to console her was beyond the strength of man."

How Randal would have liked to pitch him over the hedge-row into a flourishing bed of nettles which he knew to be thereabout! But he restrained himself, and made a stiff bow instead.

"This is very interesting," he said, "no doubt; but I fail to see what I have to do with it. It was not my fault that my coming was at so indiscreet a moment."

"Then I may ask you not to betray us," said Rob; "the circumstances are peculiar, as you will easily perceive. I should not wish—"

"Really this is doubly unnecessary," said Randal, angrily; "I am not a gossip, nor would it occur to me to betray any one. Is not this enough?"

"I should have liked to take you into my confidence," said Rob, "to ask your advice—"

"My advice? It could not be of much use." But why should he be angry? Other love affairs had been confided to him, and he had not rejected the confidence; but this fellow was not his friend, and it was a dastardly thing to take advantage of a poor little girl in her trouble. "I am no more a judge than I am a gossip," he said; "take my assurance that what I saw shall be precisely as if I had not seen it. Good-night," he added, abruptly, turning on his heel. Rob found himself alone in the middle of the road, feeling somehow shrunken and small, he could not tell why. But presently there burst upon him the recollection, the realization of all that had happened, and Randal Burnside's implied contempt (if it was not rather envy) ceased to affect him. He turned down the path across the fields where he had first met Margaret, in a kind of half-delirious triumph. He was "in love" too, and had that delight quite honestly, if also superficially, to fill up the measure of his happiness. To be in love with the girl who can make your fortune, who can set you above all slights and scorns, and give you all the good things the world contains—is not that the most astounding piece of good-fortune to a poor man? A mercenary courtship is always despicable; but to woo the girl whom you love, notwithstanding that she has the advantage of you in worldly goods, is permissible, nay, laudable, since it shows you to have a mind far above prejudice. Rob felt, too, that he had got this crowning gift of fortune in the most innocent and disinterested way. Had it been Jeanie whom he had met in trouble—Jeanie, who was but a poor servant-lass, and no heiress, and with whom he had been

once in love, as he was now in love with Margaret—his tenderness would all have come back to him, and he would have exerted himself to console her in the self-same way. He would have done it by instinct, by nature, out of pure pity and affectionateness, and warm desire to make her happy, if he had not done so out of love. The weeping girl would have been irresistible to him. "And thus I won my Genievre," he said to himself, as he turned homeward in an intoxication of happiness. His success went to his head like wine. He could have danced, he could have sung, as he went along the darkling path through the fields. He had won his Margaret, the prettiest, the sweetest of all his loves. His heart was all aglow with the thought of her, and melting with tenderness over her tears and her grief. His beautiful little lady, Margaret! The others had been but essays in love. He did not forget them; not one of them but Rob had a kind thought for, and would have been kind to had occasion served, Jeanie among the rest. He did not suppose for a moment that it had ever occurred to him to marry Jeanie. She would have been as unsuitable a wife for a minister as for a prince. He had not meant very much one way or other; but he had been very fond of Jeanie, and she of him. He was very fond of her still; and if he had seen her cry would have been as ready to comfort her as if Margaret did not exist. But Margaret! Margaret was the queen of all. That white, soft, lady's hand! Never any like it had lingered in Rob's before. He was as happy as kings very seldom are, if all tales be true, and was no more ashamed of himself than if he had been a young monarch giving a throne to his chosen, as soon as he had got clear of Randal Burnside.

CHAPTER XX.

RANDAL returned to the Manse preoccupied and abstracted, his mother could not tell why. He brought her word that Sir Ludovic was in the same condition as before, neither better nor worse, and that the ladies had arrived; but he told no more.

"Did you see nobody?" Mrs. Burnside asked. Perhaps in her heart she had hoped that her son might occupy some such post of comforter as Rob Glen had assumed, if not quite in the same way.

"I saw old John," said Randal; "the ladies were with their father, and John was so gruff that I fear things must be looking badly. He grumbled behind his hand, 'What change could they expect in a day?' as if your inquiries irritated him. I don't wonder if they do. I think I should be worried too by constant questions, if any one was ill who belonged to me."

"Oh, don't say that, Randal," said Mrs. Burnside; "we must always pay proper respect. You may depend upon it, Jean and Grace are capable of saying that we paid no attention at all if we did not send twice a day. One must be upon one's p's and q's with such people. And Margaret—you saw nothing of poor little Margaret? It is for her my heart bleeds. It is more a ploy than anything else for Jean and Grace."

The same remark had been made by Bell in

the vaulted kitchen the very same night. "It's just a ploy for the leddies," Bell said; "I heard them say they were going to look out all the old things in the high room. You'll see they'll have a' out, and make their regulations, wha's to have this, and wha's to have that; but I say it should all go to Miss Margret. She'll have little enough else on the Leslie side of the house. I'll speak to Mr. Leslie about it. He has not muckle to say, but he's a just man."

"A wheen auld duds and rubbish," said John, who was busy preparing still another trayful of provisions for his beleaguered city upstairs.

"Ay; but leddies think muckle o' them," said Bell. They had not surmounted their sorrow, but already it had ceased to affect them as a novelty, and all the inevitable arrangements had been brought nearer by the arrival of the visitors. These arrangements, are they not the saving of humanity, which without them must have suffered so much more from the perpetual falling out of one after another familiar figure on the way? Even now it occupied Bell a little, and the ladies a great deal, to think of these stores, which must be arranged and disposed of somehow, in the high room. Margaret's wild grief and terror were not within the range of any such consolation; but those who felt less keenly found in them a great relief.

The day after their arrival, Mrs. Bellingham and her sister went up-stairs with much solemnity of aspect, but great internal satisfaction, to do their duty. Sir Ludovic was still "very comfortable," he said; but dozed a great deal, and even when he was not dozing kept his eyes shut, while they were with him. They had remained by his bedside all the previous evening with the most conscientious discharge of duty, and Jean had done everything a woman could do to keep up his spirits, assuring him that he would soon feel himself again, and planning a hundred things which were to be done "as soon as you are about." To say that this never deceived Sir Ludovic, is little. He listened to it all with a smile, knowing that she was as little deceived as he was. If he had not been in bed and so feeble, he would have shrugged his shoulders and said it was Jean's way. Miss Grace had not the opportunity to talk, had she wished it; but she did not take the same line in any case. She stood by him on the other side, and from time to time put down her face to touch his, and said, "Dearest papa!" When he wanted anything, she was so anxious to be of use that she would almost choke him by putting his drink to his lips as if he had been a baby.

Poor Sir Ludovic was very patient; they amused him as if they had been a scene in a comedy; but he was very tired when night came, and this was one of the reasons why he kept his eyes closed next morning. He woke up, however, when Margaret stole in—a pale little ghost, large-eyed and trembling. She looked at him so piteously, scarcely able to speak, that the old man was moved to the very heart, notwithstanding the all-absorbing languor of his condition. "Are you better to-day, papa?" she said, in a scarcely audible whisper. When he put out his hand to her, she took it in both hers, and laid down her pretty head upon it, and cried silently, her shoulders heaving with suppressed

sobs, though she tried her best, poor child, not to betray them.

"My little Peggy!" said her father, "why is this? Have I not told you I am very comfortable? And by-and-by I shall be more than comfortable—happy; so everybody says; and so I believe, too, though it troubles me not to know a little better. And you will be—like all of us who have lost our parents. It is a loss that must come, my little girl."

"Oh no, no, papa!" her voice was muffled and hoarse with crying. She could not consent to her own desolation.

"Ah yes, my little girl, it must come; and so we go on to have children of our own, and then to leave them *à la grace de Dieu*. My Peggy, listen! If you were old like Jean and Grace, you would not care; and then think this wonder to yourself: I am glad that my little girl is so young and breaks her heart. Glad! think of that, my little Peggy. It is good to see that your little heart is broken. It will mend, but it warms my old one."

"Oh, papa!" she cried, kissing his pale hand, "oh, papa!" but could not lift her head or look him in the face.

"So now, my little girl," he said, "we will not make believe, you and I, but acknowledge that we are going to part for a long, long time, my Peggy. I hope for a very long time; but probably," he said, with a smile, "if all is true that we fancy and believe, it will not be so long for me as for you. I shall have the best of it. You would like your old father to have the best of it, my little girl?"

At this she lifted her face and gave him a look which said Yes, yes, a hundred times! but could not speak.

"I knew you would," he said. "I, you see, will find myself among old friends; and we will have our talks about what's come and gone since we parted, and there will be a great many people to make acquaintance with that I have known only—in the spirit, as the Bible says;—and there will be the One, you know, that you say your prayers to, my Peggy. When you say your prayers, you can fancy (the best of life is fancy," said Sir Ludovic, with a faint smile,) "that I'm there somewhere, about what the Bible calls His footstool, and that He, perhaps, being so tender-hearted, may call to me and say, 'Ludovic! here is your little girl.'"

"Oh, papa! will you say something more, something more?"

"I would if I could, my Peggy; but I am tired again. I'll have a little doze now; but sit still and stay by me, my own little girl."

And there Margaret sat almost all the day. Excessive weeping brought its own cure, and she could not weep any more, but sat like a snow statue, except that her eyes were swollen; and by-and-by fell into a kind of torpor, a doze of the spirit, sitting in the warm stillness, with no sound but the soft stir of the fire, and sometimes the appearance of old John, who would open the door stealthily, and look in with his long, grave, serious face to see if anything was wanted. Margaret sat holding her father's hand, stilled by exhaustion and warmth, and quiet and grief: and Sir Ludovic dozed, opening his eyes now and then, smiling, dozing again. So the long, still morning went by.

A very different scene was going on in the high room, which was over the long room, and as long and large, running the whole width of the house. It had a vaulted roof, curiously painted with old coats of arms, and was hung with old tapestry, gradually falling to pieces by process of time. Several of the windows, which had originally lighted it, had been built up in the days of the window-tax, and stretching across the place where two of them had been was a great oak "aumory" or press, full of those riches which John called "old rubbish," but which were prized by ladies, Bell knew. There were old clothes enough to have set up several theatres, costumes of all kinds, sacques and pelisses, brocade and velvets, feathers and lace. Mrs. Bellingham remembered specially that there was a drawer full of lace; but Sir Ludovic had never permitted these treasures to be ransacked when his elder daughters were at Earl's-hall. He would not tolerate any commotion over his head, and accordingly they had been shut out from these delightful hoards. It was with corresponding excitement now that they opened the doors, their fingers trembling with eagerness. Mrs. Bellingham had interpreted something he said into a desire that they should make this investigation, and had immediately declared that his wish was a law to her.

"Certainly, Grace," she had said; "we will do it at whatever cost, since papa wishes it."

"Oh yes, if dearest papa wishes it," said Grace. And Sir Ludovic smiled, as usual, seeing the whole, with an amused toleration of their weakness. Jean got out the drawer of lace with nervous anxiety. "It may be nothing, it may be nothing," she said, meaning to save herself from disappointment. She took out the drawer altogether, and carried it to the window where there was a good light, with her heart beating.

"Don't be excited, Grace," she said, "perhaps it is only modern; most likely mere babies' caps, Valenciennes and common stuff." Then she made a little pause, gave one hurried glance, and produced the one word "Point!" with an almost shriek.

"Point?" said Miss Grace, pressing forward with the point of her nose; she was short-sighted, and only thus could she inspect the treasure. Mrs. Bellingham held her off with one hand, while with the other she dived among the delicate yellow rags; the excitement grew to a height when she brought out her hand garlanded with wreaths as of a fairy web. There was a moment of silent adoration while the two ladies gazed at it. Some sea-fairy, with curious knowledge of all the starry fishes and twisted shells, and filmy fronds of weed at the bottom of the ocean, must have woven this. "Venice! and I never saw finer; and not a thread broken!" cried the finder, almost faint with delight.

"And enough to trim you from top to toe," said Grace, solemnly. Bell coming in jealously on some pretence, saw them, with their hands uplifted and eyes gleaming, and approached to see what the cause of so much emotion might be.

"Eh!" said Bell, "the heap o' things that us poor folk miss for want o' kennin'. Is that something awfu' grand now, leddies, that makes you look so fain?"

"It is a most lovely piece of lace," cried Mrs.

Jean. "Venice point; though I fear, Bell, you will not know what that means. Every little bit done by the needle—you will understand that. Look at all those little sprays."

"Eh, leddies," said Bell. "Ye ken what the fishwife says in ane o' Sir Walter's novels—'It's no fish you're buyin', but men's lives.' Eh, what heaps o' poor women's een must be workit into that anld rag. But it was my late lady's a' the same. I've seen her wear it, and many a time she's told me the same story. So it will be Miss Margret's part o' her fortune," said the old house-keeper, with malicious demureness. This discouraged the investigators considerably.

"I never saw it before," said Mrs. Bellingham; "but then I knew but little of the late Lady Leslie; of course, if it was her mother's it must be Margaret's. Fold it up and put it aside, Grace. Was this Lady Leslie's too?"

"Na, I canna say; I never saw that before," said Bell, overwhelmed. "Eh, that was never made by woman's fingers. It must be shaped out o' the gossamer in the autumn mornings, or the foam of the sea."

But Bell's presence disturbed the inquiry; it was not until she was called away to see to Sir Ludovic's beef-tea that they fully rallied to their work.

"I don't believe a word of what that old woman says. Lady Leslie, indeed! Lady Leslie was not five-and-twenty when she died, poor thing. Stand out of the way, Grace, don't come so close. You may be sure you shall see it all—and no girl understands lace. It might be her mother's? Dear me, what a memory you have got, Grace! She had no mother. She would never have married poor papa if there had been a mother to look after her. Thank Providence, Margaret will be better off. This affliction," said Mrs. Bellingham, with solemnity, "which is so sad for all of us, will not be without its good side for poor little neglected Margaret. Though whether it is not too late to make any change in her—"

"She is very nice-looking," said Miss Grace, "and being pretty covers a great deal—at least as long as you are young."

"Pretty! None of the Leslies were ever ugly," said her sister; "but it breaks my heart to look at her. Neither education nor manners. She might be a country lass at the meanest farm; she might be a fisher-girl mending nets—Grace, I wish you would sometimes let me get in a word! It's melancholy to see her running about in those cotton frocks, and think that she is my father's daughter. We will have our hands full with that girl. Now this is old Flanders—there is not very much of it. I remember it as well as if I had seen it yesterday, on old Aunt Jean."

"Then that should be yours, for you were her name-daughter—"

"Grace, how can you be so Scotch! Say god-child—you can always say godchild—it sounds a great deal better!"

"But we were not English Church people when we were born, and there's no godmo—"

"I think there never was such a clatter in this world!" cried Mrs. Bellingham. "Talk—talk—one cannot get in a word! I know papa's old-fashioned ways as well as you do, but why should we publish them? What would anybody think at the Court if it was known that we were Pres-

byterians—not that I ever was a Presbyterian after I was old enough to think for myself.”

“It was being at school,” said Grace; “and a great trouble it was to have to drive all the way to Fifetown on Sundays, instead of going to Dr. Burnside. You were married, it didn’t matter for you; but—do you mean to have Aubrey down, Jean, after all?”

“Of course I mean to have Aubrey,” said Mrs. Bellingham. She had been carefully measuring on her finger and marking the lengths of the lace, which was the reason Miss Leslie had been allowed to deliver herself of so long a speech. “He will perhaps join us somewhere after this sad time is over. It is not to be supposed that we will be able for much company at first,” she said, with a sigh. “There are three yards of the Flanders—too much for a bodice and too little for anything else, and it would be wicked to cut it. After all we have gone through, of course there will be a time when we will have no spirits for company; but Aubrey is not like a stranger. Being my nephew, he will be a kind of cousin to Margaret. Dear me, I wish I could think there was a good chance that he would be something more; for the responsibility on you and me of a young girl—”

“Oh, he will be very willing to be something more,” cried Miss Grace, with alacrity; “a pretty young creature like Margaret, and a good income.”

“Her income is but a small one to tempt a Bellingham; but I suppose because he is my nephew you must have a fling at him. I have often noticed that inclination in you, Grace. I am sure my family, by marriage, have never but shown you the greatest attention, and Aubrey never makes any difference between us. He calls you Aunt Grace, though you are no more his Aunt Grace—Here is a very nice piece, I don’t know what it is. It is English, or perhaps it might be Argentan, or one of the less known kinds. Would you like to have it? It is very pretty. So here are three pieces to commence with: the Venice point for Margaret, if it really was her mother’s—but I don’t believe it—and the Flanders for me.”

Grace lifted the piece allotted to her now with but scant satisfaction. It was Jean who had always the lion’s share; it was she who took the management of everything, and put herself forward. Though Miss Leslie was very willing to sacrifice herself when occasion offered, she did not like to be sacrificed calmly by others, without deriving any glory from it. But she said nothing. There was a great deal more still to be looked over, and Jean could not always have so good an excuse for appropriating the best, as she had when she secured Aunt Jean’s old piece of Flanders lace.

While these very different scenes were going on within the walls of Earl’s-hall, the old gray house in which so soon the last act of a life was to be accomplished was the centre of many thoughts and discussions outside. At the breakfast-table at the Manse Mrs. Burnside read aloud a letter from Mrs. Ludovic in Edinburgh, asking whether the Minister’s wife could receive her husband, who was uneasy about his father, and anxious “to be on the spot,” whatever happened.

“I thought of sending my Effie with Ludovic,

if you would take her in,” Mrs. Leslie wrote. “Of course, Earl’s-hall, so little bedroom accommodation as they have, is quite full with Jean and Grace and their maid. It is very provoking that it should be such a fine old house, and one that we would be very unwilling to let go out of the family, and yet so little use. Ludovic has always such confidence in your kindness, dear Mrs. Burnside, that I thought I might ask you. Of course, you will say No *at once*, if it is not convenient. Effie is not very strong, and I would like her to have a change; and we thought it might be something for poor little Margaret, if anything happens, to have some one near her of her own age. She is the one to be pitied; and yet she has been sadly neglected, poor child—and I don’t doubt but in this, as in other matters, all things will work together for good.”

“That’s a sorely misused text,” said the Minister, shaking his head.

“Is this better?” said Randal: “‘Whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.’ They seem all rushing upon their prey.”

“No, no, you must not say that. Their own father—who should come to his death-bed but his children? I’ll write and say, ‘Certainly, let Ludovic come;’ and if you can do without that green room for your old portmanteaux, Randal, I’ll find a place for them among the other boxes; and we might take little Effie too. I am always glad to give a town-child the advantage of good country air.”

“She cannot be such a child if she is the same age as Margaret—”

“And what is Margaret but a child? Poor thing, poor thing! Yes, she has been neglected; she has not had the up-bringing a lady of her family should have; but, dear me,” said Mrs. Burnside, who was of the old school, “I’ve seen such things before, and what harm did it do them? She cannot play the piano, or speak French, or draw, or even dance, so far as I can tell; but she cannot but be a lady—it was born with her—and the questions she asks are just extraordinary. I would not make a stipulation for the piano myself everywhere; but still there’s no doubt she has been neglected. Jean and Grace are far from being ill women; but I don’t think I would like to change old Sir Ludovic, that never said a harsh word to her, for the like of them.”

“Yes, mother, Margaret can draw. The young fellow who put Sir Ludovic into his carriage last Sunday, whom you were so impatient of—”

“Me impatient! Randal, you take the very strangest ideas. Why should I be disturbed, one way or other, by Rob Glen? What about Rob Glen?”

“Not much, except that he is giving her—lessons. It seems he is an artist—”

“An artist—Rob Glen! But oh, did I not say Mrs. Ludovic was right? She has been sorely neglected! Not that old Sir Ludovic meant any harm. He was an old man and she a child; and he forgot she was growing up, and that a girl is not a child so long as a boy. After all, perhaps, she will be better in the hands of Grace and Jean.”

“And so the text is not misused, after all,” said the Minister, once more shaking his head.

CHAPTER XXI.

LUDOVIC came accordingly, with his little daughter Effie—a sentimental little maiden, with a likeness to her aunt Grace, and very anxious to be “of use” to Margaret, who, though only six months older than herself, was her aunt also. Ludovic himself was a serious, silent man—not like the Leslies, everybody said, taking after his mother, who had been a Montgomery, and of a more steady-going race. While Mrs. Bellingham sat by her father’s side and talked to him about what was to be done when he was better, saying, “Oh yes, you are mending—slowly, making a little progress every day, though you will not believe it,” and Grace stood, eager, too, to “be of use,” touching his cheek—most generally, poor lady, with her nose, which was cold, and not agreeable to the patient—and saying, “Dearest papa!” Ludovic, for his part, would come and sit at the foot of the bed for an hour at a time, not saying anything, but keeping his serious eyes upon the old man, who was more glad than ever to doze, and keep his eyes shut, now that so many affectionate watchers were round him. Now and then Sir Ludovic would rouse up when they were all taking a rest from their anxious duties, as Grace expressed it, and “was just his ain man again,” Bell would say.

“Oh, if my children would but neglect me!” he said, when one of these blessed intervals came.

“There is nobody but me here now, papa,” said Margaret, like a little shadow in the corner, with her red eyes.

“And that is just as it ought to be, my little Peggy; but who,” he said, with that faint little laugh, which scarcely sounded now at all, but abode in his eyes with all its old humor—“who will look after your pronouns when I am away, my little girl?” But sometimes he moaned a little, and complained that it was long. “Could you not give me a jog, John?” he would say; “I’m keeping everybody waiting. Jean and Grace will lose their usual holiday, and Ludovic has his business to think of.”

“They’re paying you every respect, Sir Ludovic,” said John, not feeling that his master was fully alive to the domestic virtue exhibited by his children. Perhaps John, too, felt that to keep up all the forms of anxious solicitude was hard for such a lengthened period, which made the “respect” of the group around Sir Ludovic’s death-bed more striking still. Sir Ludovic smiled, and repeated the sentiment with which he began the conversation—“I wish my children would but neglect me.” But he was always patient and grateful and polite. He never said anything to Grace about her cold nose; he did not tell Ludovic that his steady stare fretted him beyond measure; he let Jean prattle on as she would, though he knew that what she said was all a fiction. Sir Ludovic was never a more high-bred gentleman than in this last chapter of his life. He was bored beyond measure, but he never showed it. Only when he was alone with his little daughter, with the old servants who loved him, who always understood him more or less, and always amused him, which was, perhaps, as important, he would rouse up by moments and be his old self.

As for Margaret, she led the strangest double life—a life which no one suspected, which she did not herself realize. They made her go to bed every night, though she came and went, a white apparition, all the night through, to her father’s door to listen, lest anything should happen while she was away from him; and in the evenings after dinner, when the family were all about Sir Ludovic’s bed, she would steal out, half reluctant, half eager, half guilty, half happy; guilty because of the strange flutter of sick and troubled happiness that would come upon her.

“Yes, my bonnie lamb, ye’ll get a moment to yourself; gang your ways and get a breath of air,” Bell would say, all unwitting that something else was waiting for Margaret besides the fresh air and soft soothing of the night.

“I will be in the wood, Bell, where you can cry upon me. You will be sure to cry upon me if there’s any need.”

“My bonnie doo! I’ll cry soon enough; but there will be no need,” said the old woman, patting her shoulder as she dismissed her.

And Margaret would flit along the broken ground where the potatoes had been, where her feet had made a path, and disappear into the sighing of the firs, which swept round and hid her amidst the perplexing crowd of their straight columns. There was one tree, beneath the sweeping branches of which some one was always waiting for her. It was a silver-fir, with great angular limbs, the biggest in the wood, and the little mossy knoll between its great roots was soft and green as velvet. There Rob Glen was always waiting, looking out anxiously through the clear evenings, and with a great gray plaid ready to wrap her in when it was cold or wet. They did not feel the rain under the great horizontal branches of the firs, and the soft pattering it made was more soothing than the wild sweep of the wind coming strong from the sea. There the two would sit sheltered, and look out upon the gray mass of Earl’s-hall, with that one ruddy lighted window.

Margaret leaned upon her lover, whom, in her trouble, she did not think of as her lover, and cried and was comforted. He was the only one, she felt, except, perhaps, Bell, who was really good to her, who understood her, and did not want her to be composed and calm. He never said she should not cry, but kissed her hands and her cheek, and said soft caressing words: “My darling! my Margaret!” His heart was beating much more loudly than she could understand; but Rob, if he was not all good, had a certain tenderness of nature in him, and poetry of feeling which kept him from anything which could shock or startle her. At these moments, as the long summer day darkened and the soft gloaming spread over them, he was as nearly her true and innocent and generous lover as a man could be who was not always generous and true. He was betraying her, but to what?—only to accept his love, the best thing a man had to give; a gift, if you come to that, to give to a queen. He was not feigning nor deceiving, but loved her as warmly as if he had never loved any one before, nor meant to love any other again. And then he would go toward the house with her, not so far as he went that first night in over-boldness, when they were caught—an accident he always remembered with shame and self-reproach,

yet a certain pride, as having proved to Randal Burnside, once for all, his own inferiority, and that he, Rob Glen, had hopelessly distanced all competitors, however they might build upon being gentlemen. He led her along the edge of the wood always under cover, and stole with her, under shadow of the garden-wall, to the corner, beyond which he did not venture. Then he would take her into his arms unresisted, and they would linger for a moment, while he lavished upon Margaret every tender name he could think of—

"Remember that I am always thinking of you, always longing to be by you, to support you, to comfort you, my darling."

"Yes, I will remember," Margaret said, meekly, and there fluttered a little forlorn warmth and sweetness about her heart; and then he would release her, and, more like a shadow than ever, would stand and watch while she flitted along the wall to the great door.

And what thoughts were in Rob's mind when she was gone! That almost innocence, and nobleness and truth, which had existed in the emotion of their meeting, disappeared with Margaret, leaving him in a tumult of other and less noble thoughts. He knew very well that he had beguiled her, though he meant nothing but love and devotion to her. He had betrayed her, in the moment of her sorrow, into a tacit acceptance of him, and committal of herself from which there was no escape. Rob knew very well—no one better—that there were girls who took such love passages lightly enough; but to a delicate little maiden, "a lady," like Margaret, he knew there could be but one meaning in this. Though she had scarcely responded at all, she had accepted his tenderness, and committed herself forever. And he knew he had betrayed her into this, and was glad with a bounding sense of delight and triumph such as made him almost spurn the earth. This occurrence gave him, not only Margaret, whom he was in love with, and whose society was for the time sweeter to him than anything in the world, but with her such a dazzling flood of advantages as might well have turned any young man's head: a position such as he might toil all his life for, and never be able to reach: money, such as would make him admired and looked up to by everybody he knew: a life of intoxicating happiness and advancement, with no need to do anything he did not care to do, or take any further trouble about his living, one way or another. Rob's organization was not so fine as to make him unwilling to accept all these advantages from his wife; in practical life there are indeed very few men who are thus delicately organized; neither were his principles so high or so honorable as to give him very much trouble about the manner in which he had won all this, by surprise. He just felt it, just had a sense that there was something here to be slurred over as much as possible—but it did not spoil his pleasure. It was, however, terribly difficult to know what it would be best to do in the circumstances, what step he should next take: whether he should boldly face the family, on the chance that Sir Ludovic would be glad before he died to see his daughter with a protector and companion of her own, or whether it was wise to keep in the background, and watch the progress of events, keeping that sure hold

upon Margaret herself, which he felt he could now trust to. He had done her good; he had been more to her than any one else, and had helped her to bear her burden; and he had thus woven himself in with every association of her life, at its, as yet, most important period, and made himself inseparable from her.

He had no fear of losing his hold of Margaret. But from the family, the brother and sisters who were like uncle and aunts to the young creature, Rob knew very well he should find little mercy. They would all want to make their own out of her, he felt sure; for it is hard, even when escaping from all sensation of vulgarity in one's person, to get rid of that deeply-rooted principle of vulgarity which shows itself in attributing mean motives to other people. This birth-stain of the meaner sort, not always confined to the lower classes, was strong in him. He did not feel that it was her fortune and her importance which made Margaret valuable in his own eyes (for was he not in love?), but he had no hesitation in deciding that her family and all about her must look at her in this mercenary light. They certainly would not let her fortune slip through their fingers if they could help it. There might be some hope of a legitimate sanction from Sir Ludovic, who was beyond the reach of any advantage from his daughter's money, and might like to feel that she was "settled" and safe; but there could be no hope from the others. They would have plans of their own for her. The Leslies were known not to be rich, and an heiress was not a thing to be lightly parted with. They would keep her to themselves; of that he was sure. And at such a moment as this, what chance was there of reaching Sir Ludovic's bedside, and gaining his consent? It would be impossible to do so without running the gauntlet of all the family; it would make a scene, and probably hurt the old man or kill him.

Thus he was musing, as after an interval he followed Margaret's course under the shadow of the garden-wall, meaning to make his way out by what was called the avenue, though it was merely a path opened through the belt of wood, which was thin on that side, to the gate in the high-road. But this spot was evidently unlucky to Rob. When he was about to pass the door of Earl's-hall, he met Mr. Leslie coming out. Mr. Leslie was one of the men who are always more or less suspicious, and he had just seen Margaret, with her hat in her hand and the fresh night air still about her, going up the winding stair. Ludovic looked at the man walking along under the wall with instinctive mistrust.

"Did you want anything?" he asked, hastily.

"This path is private, I think."

"I think not," said Rob; "at least everybody has been free to pass as long as I can remember; but I was on my way," he added, thinking it good to try any means of conciliation, "to ask for Sir Ludovic."

"There is no change," said Mr. Leslie, stiffly. He was himself, to tell the truth, very weary of this invariable answer, but there was nothing else to be said; and he tried to see who the inquirer was, but was unable to make him out in the late dusk. He had never seen him before, for one thing. "You are from—"

"I am from nowhere," said Rob. "I don't suppose you know me at all, Mr. Leslie, or even

my name. I am Robert Glen; but Sir Ludovic has been very kind to me. He has allowed me to come and sketch the house, and latterly I have seen a great deal of him. His illness has grieved me as much—as if I had a right to be grieved. He was very kind. Latterly I saw a great deal of him."

"Ah!" said Mr. Leslie. He had heard the people at the Manse talking of Rob Glen, and he had seen Margaret's return a minute before. What connection there might be between these two things he did not very clearly perceive; but there seemed to be something, and he was suspicious, as indeed he had a right to be.

"Is he too ill—to ask to see him?" said Rob, with a sense that a refusal would take all the responsibility off his shoulders. If he could see Sir Ludovic it might be honorable to explain everything; but if not—

"See him!" said Mr. Leslie; "I don't know what your acquaintance may be with my father, Mr. Glen, but he is much too ill to see anybody—scarcely even his own children. I am leaving early, as you perceive, because I feel that it is too much for him to have even all of ourselves there."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Rob, with the proper expression in his voice; but in reality he was relieved; no need now to say anything to the family. He had Margaret only to deal with, and in her he could fully trust, he thought. "I began a sketch of Sir Ludovic," he said, "for which he had promised me a second sitting; will you kindly ask Miss Margaret Leslie to send it back to me, that I may finish it for her as well as I can? Poor though my drawing was, it will have its value now."

"I will tell my sister," said Mr. Leslie, and he swung open the gate and waited till Rob passed through. "Good-night," said the young man. It was better in any case to be courteous and friendly, if they would permit it, with "the family." But Mr. Leslie only made an indistinct murmur in the darkness. He gave no articulate response; there was no cordiality on his side; and why, indeed, should he be cordial to the farmer's son? Rob went quickly homeward, forcing a smile of contempt, though there was nobody to see. This haughty and distant personage would yet learn to respond to any salutation his sister's husband might make; he would have to be civil, if nothing more, Rob said within himself. What was he that he should be so high and mighty? An Edinburgh advocate working for his living, a poor laird at the best, with a ramshackle old house for all his inheritance. Thus the vulgar came uppermost again in Rob's heart; he scorned for his poverty the man with whom he was indignant for scorning him, because he was unknown and poor. He hurried home with this little fillip of additional energy given to all his schemes. His mother was standing at the door as he approached, looking out for him, or perhaps only looking to see the last of the cows looming through the dusk coming in from the fields. He was absent every night, and Mrs. Glen wanted to know where he went. She was getting impatient on all points, and had determined to wait no longer for any information he might have to give.

"Where have you been?" she asked, as he came in sight.

"To Earl's-hall."

"To Earl's-hall! And what have you been doing at Earl's-hall? No drawing and fiddling while the poor auld man lies dying? Ye're ill enough, but surely you have not the heart for that?"

"I have neither been drawing nor fiddling—indeed I did not know that I could fiddle; but, all the same, I have come from Earl's-hall," he said. "Let me in, mother; I've been sitting in the wood, and the night has got cold."

"What have you been doing—sitting in the wood? There's no light to take your views—tell me," said Mrs. Glen, with determination, "what have you been doing, once for all."

"I may as well tell you," he said; "I have been sitting in the wood with Margaret."

"With—Margaret? you're no blate to speak o' a young lady like that. Rob, my bonnie man, I aye thought you were to be the lucky bairn of my family. Have ye naething mair to tell me about—Margaret? I would like weel, real weel, to hear."

"Can you keep a secret, mother?" he said. "I will tell you something if you will swear to me never to repeat it, never to hint at it, never to brag of what is coming, or to give the slightest ground for suspicion: if you will promise me this—"

"I was never a tale-pyter," said Mrs. Glen, offended, "nobody ever laid tittle-tattle, or bragging of any kind, to my door. But if you canna trust your mother without promises, I see not why you should trust her at all."

"It is not that I doubt you, mother; but you know how difficult it is not to mention a thing that is much in your mind. Margaret Leslie is my own; it is all settled and fixed between us. She came out to me in her trouble when she found her father was dying, and what could I do but comfort her, and support her, and show my feeling—"

"Oh, ay, Rob," his mother interpolated, "you were aye grand at that!"

"What could a man do else?—a sweet young creature like Margaret Leslie crying by his side! I told her, what I suppose she knew very well before, for I never hide my feelings, mother, as you say. And the issue is, she's mine. However it was done, you will not say but what it was well done. I have been fond of her since ever I can remember."

"And of twa-three mair," said Mrs. Glen, "but no a word o' that, Rob my man. Eh, but I'm weel pleased! That's what I've been thinking of since the very week you came hame. 'Now if Rob, with all his cleverness, could get that bonnie Miss Margret,' I said to myself. The Lord bless ye, my man! I aye thought you were born to be the lucky one of my family. Is it a' in her ain disposition, or have the family only power over it, Rob? Eh, my bonnie man, what a down-sitting! and the bonniest leddy in Fife of her years. You're a lucky lad, if ever there was one."

"Let me in, mother; I don't want to tell this to any ears but yours."

"Ay, ay, my man, I'll let you in," said his mother, standing aside from the door. "Come in and welcome, my lucky lad. Is there anything you would like for your supper? Naething in a' the house is ower good for such good

news. We'll take a bottle o' wine out of the press, or maybe ye would like a drap toddy just as well, which is mair wholesome. Come in, come in, my bonnie man. A bonnie lass, and plenty wi' her; and a real auld family an honor to anybody to be connected with. My word, Rob Glen, you're a lucky lad! Wha will look down upon you now? Wha will say a word about your opinions? I've never upbraided you mysel'; I saw your talents, and felt ye could bide your time. Eh," cried Mrs. Glen, exultant, "wha will say now but that marriages are made in heaven? And Rob, my bonnie man, when is it to be?"

"We are not so far as that, mother," he said; "do you think she has the heart to think of marrying, and poor old Sir Ludovic lying on his death-bed? We must wait for all that. I'm too happy in the mean time to think of more. She's mine; and that is more than I could have hoped."

"That's very true, my man: but still something settled would have been a grand stand-by," said Mrs. Glen, slightly disappointed; "I would have thought now it would have been a great comfort to Sir Ludovic to see his daughter married and settled before he slips away. But the gentry's ways are not as our ways. I'm doubting you'll have some trouble with the family, if nothing's settled afore the auld gentleman dies."

"I doubt I will, mother," said Rob; "but whatever trouble I may have, Margaret's mine, and she will never go back from her word."

CHAPTER XXII.

At last the time came when old Sir Ludovic's dozing and drowsiness, his speculations, and the gleam of humor with which they were all accompanied, and which most of those around him thought so inappropriate to his circumstances, came to an end. All his affairs were in order, his will made, though he had not much to leave, and Dr. Burnside (which was a great satisfaction to the family) paid him a daily visit for the last week of his life; so that everything was done decently and in order. Dr. Burnside had not so very much to say to the old man. He had no answer to give to his questions. He bade Sir Ludovic believe. "And so I do," he said; he could not be got to be frightened; and now that he had got over the shock of it, and into that dreamy slumbrous valley of the shadow, he did not even wish to avoid what was coming. "It is not so bad as one thinks," he said to old John, his faithful servant, and to the good minister, who was approaching old age too, though not so near as either of these old men. Dr. Burnside was a little disturbed by the smile on his patient's face, and hoped it did not show any inclination toward levity; but he was glad to hear, having that journey in view, that it was not so bad as one thought. "He is a man of a very steady faith," the Minister said, and he himself was wise enough to let Sir Ludovic glide away out of the world with that smile upon his face.

As for Jean and Grace, they did their best to disturb their father and to unsettle him, and insinuated that Dr. Burnside's instructions were

of an unsatisfactory kind. Even Bell held it orthodox that, except in cases of religious triumph and ecstasy, which no doubt were on record, a human creature should leave this earth smiling, to appear in the presence of his Maker, as she said. Mrs. Bellingham did all she could to question her father on the subject, but was not successful. "Leave him in peace," his son said; but neither was Mr. Leslie satisfied. It was very strange to them all. The old man did not even seem to feel that anxiety for Margaret's future which they expected, and never made that solemn appeal to them to take care of her, to which both the sisters were prepared to respond, and which even Ludovic expected, though he felt that, with such a large family of his own, nothing much could be looked for from him. But Sir Ludovic made no appeal. He said "My little Peggy," when all other words had failed him; and on the very last day of his life a gleam as of laughter crossed his face, and he shook his head faintly at her when she said "me" instead of "I," and thus faded quite gently and pleasantly away.

There was silence in Earl's-hall that night, silence and quiet, scarcely a whisper even between the sisters, who generally had a meeting in Mrs. Bellingham's room for a last discussion of everything that had passed, notwithstanding that they were all the day together. But on this evening nobody talked. Ludovic went away with the Minister and ate a solemn late meal, having, as everybody said, eaten nothing all day (but that was a mistake, for he had not been called to the last ceremonial till after luncheon). And in Earl's-hall everybody went to bed. They had been keeping irregular hours, had sometimes sat late, and sometimes been called early; and John and Bell, in particular, had not for a week past kept any count which was night and which was day. A few broken phrases about "*him* yonder," a groan from John, a few tears rubbed off, till her eyes were red, by Bell's apron, and the sound of "greeting" from Jeanie's little turret-room, was almost all that could be heard in the silent house. Margaret, for her part, could not "greet" as Jeanie did. She was stunned, and did not know what had happened to her. For the moment it was over; the worst had come, and a blank of utter exhaustion came over the girl. She allowed herself to be put to bed, and did nothing but sigh, long sighs which went to Bell's heart, sighs which seemed almost a physical necessity to the young bosom oppressed with such an unknown burden. Mrs. Bellingham (though she was not quite satisfied in her mind) said a few words to her maid that it was a most peaceful end, that it was beautiful to see him lying there at rest just as if he were asleep; and Miss Leslie cried copiously, and said "Dearest papa!" They were all in bed by ten o'clock, and the old gray house shut up and silent. A dark night, the wind sweeping through the firs, everything silent and hushed in earth and heaven, and all dark except the one window in which a faint watch-light burned palely, but no longer the warm, inconstant glimmer of any cheerful fire.

But with the morning, what a flood of pent-up energy and activity was let loose. They were all anxious to keep quiet in Margaret's part of the house, that she might sleep as long as possible and be kept out of every one's way. The arrangements into which everybody else plunged

were not for her. The first thing to be thought of, of course, Mrs. Bellingham said, was the mourning, and there was not a moment's time to lose. Telegraphs were not universally prevalent in those days, and one of the men from the farm had to be sent on horseback to Fifeton to send a message to Edinburgh about the bombazine and the crape.

As Sir Ludovic had anticipated, his daughter Jean did not stint him of a single fold; she meant to show "every respect." Fortunately Steward, their maid, was quite equal to the occasion, both the ladies congratulated themselves. "Of course, we shall want no evening dresses, nothing beyond the mere necessary here," Mrs. Bellingham said. "One for the morning and another to go out with, a little more trimmed, that will be all." But even for this little outfit a good deal of trouble had to be taken. That very evening a man arrived from Edinburgh with mountains of crape and boxes full of hemstitched cambric for the collars and cuffs. There was crape all over the house—even Bell and Jeanie had their share—no stint. When a man has been so much thought of as Sir Ludovic, and has a respectable family whose credit is involved in showing him every respect, a good deal of quiet bustle becomes inevitable; the house was full of whispers, of consultations, of measurements, and a great hurry and pressure to get done in time for the funeral; though the funeral was delayed long, according to use and wont in the country.

Mr. Leslie, on his part, went over all the house, and walked diligently about the farm and inspected everything, though, being a silent man, he said little about it. It was too early to say anything. When his sisters put questions to him about what he was going to do, he said he had not made up his mind; and it was only when the funeral was over, and the shutters opened, and old Sir Ludovic's chair put against the wall, that he at all opened his mind. Nearly a week passed in this melancholy interval; he had become Sir Ludovic himself, but nobody in Earl's-hall could give him the familiar title; old John ground his teeth together (though he had not many left) and tried to get it out, but the conclusion was a hurried exclamation,

"I canna do it! Pit me away, sir. Bell and me, we're ready to gang whenever ye please; but I canna ca' ye your right name."

The new Sir Ludovic, though he said little, had a kind heart. He said, "Never mind, John; tell Bell never to mind;" but Mrs. Bellingham had no such feeling. She said it was ridiculous in servants, when the family themselves had to do it. "I hope I know what is due to the living as well as to the dead," she cried; "and if I can say it, why should not John?"

But at first, no doubt, it was difficult enough. After the funeral, however, the new Sir Ludovic went "home" to Earl's-hall, where his wife came and joined him. The eldest boy, too, arrived for the ceremony itself, and walked with his father to the church-yard as one of the chief mourners. The house was filled to overflowing with the family as soon as the last act of old Sir Ludovic's earthly history was accomplished. Beds were put in the high room to accommodate the boys. It was all novelty to them, who had not known very much of their grandfather, and their mother liked being my lady. It was natural. She

had not known much of the old man any more than her children had, and he was only her father-in-law—not a very tender relationship. Thus the new tide rose at once, and new life came in. Had there been only the elders in the house, no doubt they would have kept up a drowsy appearance of gravity; but that was not to be done with young people in the house.

As for Margaret, this period passed over her like a dream. While the house was shut up, and everything went on in a pale twilight, she wandered about like a ghost, not knowing what to do or say, unable to take up any of her occupations. It seemed years to her, centuries since the careless time when she went and came so lightly, fearing no evil; trying to draw straight lines with an ineffectual pencil; sitting out and in of her father's room; getting out books for him; searching for something she might read herself; taking up for half an hour Lady Jean's old work; knitting a bit of Bell's stocking; roaming everywhere about as light as the wind. All that, Margaret thought, was over forever; but she did not "break her heart" altogether, as she supposed she would. Sometimes, indeed, an aching sense of loss, a horrible void about her would make her heart sick, and her whole being giddy with pain; but in the intervals life went on, and she found that it was possible to sit at table, to talk to the others, to have her dresses fitted on. And when the children came, there were moments when she felt inclined to smile at their curious little ways, even (was that possible?) to laugh at little Loodie, who was the youngest of the boys, and never, Heaven forbid! would be Sir Ludovic. Bell, too, found little Loodie "a real diverting bairn." "Eh, if his grandpapaw had but been here to see him!" she said, with tears and smiles.

But Margaret, naturally, was more unwilling to be "diverted" than Bell was. When she was beguiled into a smile at little Loodie, it was very unwillingly, and she would recover herself with a sense of guilt; for it was a terrible revelation to Margaret, a most painful discovery to feel that a smile was possible even within a week of her father's death, and that her heart was not altogether broken. She wept for her own heartlessness as well as for her dear father, of whom she had thought beforehand that all she wished for would be to be buried in his grave.

But she went out of the house only once between the death and the funeral. Rob, for his part, roamed round about it, and stayed for hours in the woods, looking for her; but it seemed to Margaret that for the moment she shrank from Rob. Oh, how could she have thought of Rob, or any one, while he lay dying? How could she have gone out and spent those hours in the wood with him, which might have been spent with Sir Ludovic? What would she give now, she said to herself, to be able to steal up-stairs to him, to sit by his bedside, to hold his hand, to hear him say "My little Peggy" again. Now that this was no longer possible, she felt a kind of resentment against Rob, who had occupied her at times when it was still possible. And the state of his mind during this interval was not pleasant to contemplate. When he had asked once or twice for the ladies, he had no further excuse for returning openly, and he was afraid to be seen lest he should again meet some one—perhaps the new

Sir Ludovic himself—who had not been delighted by his previous appearance, or some jealous spectator like Randal Burnside.

Rob stood for hours behind the big fir-tree looking toward the house in which there were more lights now, but no glimmer in that window which had been his beacon for so long, and more voices audible—never Margaret's soft notes, like a bird. He was very fond of Margaret. Those dreary evenings when she was kept from him, or kept herself from him, Rob was wild with love, and fear, and disappointment. Could *they* have found it out? could *they* be keeping her away? He stood under the fir-tree scarcely daring to move, and watched with his heart beating in his ears. Sometimes John would loom heavily across the vacant space, coming out again, according to his old habit, to "take a look at the potatoes." Sometimes Bell would appear at the opening of the little court-yard to "cry upon" her husband when something was wanted. "There's aye something wanting now," John would say, as he turned back. Or Rob would see some one at the wall, drawing water, under the shade of the thorn-tree, without knowing who it was, or that there were any thoughts of himself, except those which might be in Margaret's bosom, within the gray shadow of those old walls. How breathlessly he watched John's lumbering steps about the potatoes, and the whiteness of Bell's aprons, and the clang of the water-pails!

But no one came. Had she accepted his consolations only because there was no one else to comfort her, without caring for him who breathed them in her ear? Were all his lofty hopes to end in nothing, and his love to be rejected? Terror and anxiety thrilled through Rob as he stood and watched, tantalized by all those sounds and half-seen sights. Once only she came, and then she would say little or nothing to him: she had never said much; but she shrank from his outstretched arms now, crying, "Don't, don't!" in tones half of terror. That one meeting was a greater disappointment than when she did not come at all. Had she but been taking advantage of him, as great people, Rob knew, were so ready to take advantage of small people? And now that she needed him no longer, was she about to cast him off? In that case, all his fine anticipations, all his triumph, would be like Alnascher's hopes in the story. His very heart quailed in terror. The disappointment, the downfall, the decay of hopes and prospects would be more than he could bear.

The truth was that Margaret, left all alone suddenly in the midst of what to her was a crowd of people, all more or less strangers, seemed to have lost the power of doing so much for herself as to go anywhere. Though they amused her sometimes in spite of herself, they kept her in a kind of subjugation which was very confusing and very novel.

"Where are you going, Margaret?" Mrs. Bellingham would say, if she went across the room.

"Darling Margaret, don't leave us," Grace would add, next time she moved. Even Effie, who was so anxious to be "of use," would interfere, throwing her arms about her youthful aunt, whispering, "You are not to go to your own room and cry. Oh, come with me to the tower, and look at the sunset."

"Yes, my dear Margaret, go with Effie; it

will take off your thoughts a little," said the new Lady Leslie.

Thus Margaret had weights of kindness hung round her on every side, and was changed in every particular of her life from the light-hearted creature who flitted about like the wind, in and out a hundred times a day. Even Bell approved of this thralldom.

"Ah, my bonnie dear, keep wi' Miss Effie. She's your ain flesh and blood. What would you do out your lane when you have sic company?"

"I always went out alone before," Margaret said, mechanically turning up-stairs again.

"Yes, my bonnie doo; but you hadna a bonnie young Miss, a cousin of your ain (for niece is but a jest), to keep ye company."

Thus Margaret was held fast. And by-and-by her habit of wandering out would probably have been broken, and she might have been carried away by her sisters safe out of all contact or reach of her lover. For the lover, as will be seen, was not violently in Margaret's mind. If she missed him, there were so many other things that she missed more! He was but part of the general privation, impoverishment of her life. She had lost everything, she thought—her father, her careless sweetness of living, her light heart, the sunshine of her morning. All these other happinesses being gone, how could Margaret make an effort for Rob only? She was not strong enough to do this. She was not even unwilling to let him go with all the rest. Perhaps there was ingratitude in the feeling. He had been very "kind" to her, had given her a little comfort of sweet sympathy in her trouble. It was ungrateful to forget that now; and she did not forget it, but was too languid, too weary, and had lost too much already to be able to make any effort for this. Meanwhile, while she sat in a kind of lethargy within, and followed the directions of all about her, and let him drop from her, Rob roamed about outside, gnashing his teeth, sometimes almost cursing her, sometimes almost praying for her, watching every door and window, holding the post of a most impatient sentinel under the great fir-tree.

It happened to Margaret, however, one evening to find herself alone. Mrs. Bellingham had a headache, a thing which was not generally regarded as a great calamity in places where Mrs. Bellingham paid visits. It confined her to her room, and it was, on the whole, not a disagreeable change for her friends. Her sister, who in weal and woe was inseparable from her, though she would have been glad enough to escape too, was, under Jean's orders, writing letters for her in her room. And the new proprietors of Earl's-hall were glad enough for once to be by themselves. They took a conjugal walk about the place, examining into everything—the ruined part to see if anything could be done to it; the stables, which had been made out of part of the ruin; even the pigsty, which was John's favorite spot in the demesne. The subject of consideration in the mind of the pair was whether the old place, with all its associations, should be sold, or whether anything could be done with it, cheaply, to adapt it for the country residence of the family. In its present state, certainly, it did not take much to "keep up;" but, on the other hand, the rental of the little scraps of es-

tate which old Sir Ludovic had left scarcely justified the new Sir Ludovic, with his large family, in "keeping up" any country place at all. To decide upon this subject was the reason of Lady Leslie's presence here.

And Effie, whose mourning was less deep, and her mind less affected by "the family loss" than Margaret, had gone to visit Mrs. Burnside. Even little Loodie was being put to bed. Margaret, for the first time since her father's death, was alone. She had found that day, among a collection of papers into which it had been shuffled heedlessly amidst the confusion of the moment, the drawing of her father which Rob Glen had begun on his first appearance at Earl's-hall; and this had plunged her back into all that fresh agitation of loss and loneliness which is, in its way, a kind of pleasure to the mind, instead of the dull stupor of habitual grief which follows upon the immediate passion of an event. She had wept till her eyes and her strength were exhausted, but her heart relieved a little; and then that heart yearned momentarily for some one to comfort her. Where was *he*? She had not thought of him in this aspect before—perhaps looking for her, perhaps waiting for her, he who had been so "kind." She put on her hat with the heavy gauze veil which Jean had thought necessary. She was all hung and garlanded with crape, the hat itself wrapped in a cloud of it, her dress covered with it, so that Margaret's very movements were hampered. The grass always damp, more or less, the mossy underground beneath the firs, the moist brown earth of the potato-ground, were all alike unsuitable for this heavy and elaborate robe of mourning. Margaret gathered it about her and put on her hat, with its thick black gauze veil—she did not know herself in all this panoply of woe—and went out. There was nobody about. John was showing the new Baronet his pigsty, and Bell, more comforted and cheerful than she had yet felt, stood in the door of the byre and talked to Lady Leslie about her favorite, her bonnie brown cow. The old people were amused and pleased; they were more near "getting over it" than they had felt yet; and even John began to feel that it might be possible, after a while, to say Sir Ludovic again.

Margaret went out, hearing their voices, though she did not see them. She had no feeling of bitterness toward her brother, though he was assuming possession of her old home. He had not much to say, but he was kind; and good Lady Leslie was a good mother, and could not but speak softly and think gently of everybody. They were, perhaps, a humdrum and somewhat care-worn couple, but no unkindness was in them. It gave Margaret no pang to hear them talking about Bell's beloved Brownie or what they were to do with the stables, neither did it occur to her to take any pains not to be seen by them. It was still light, but the evening was waning, the sky glowing in the west, the shadows gathering under the fir-trees in the woods which lay to eastward of the house. She made her way to her usual haunt, her feet making no sound on the soft path. Would he be there, waiting for her as in that dreadful time? or would he have gone away? Margaret had not enough animation left to feel that she would be disappointed if he were not there, but yet

her heart was a little lighter, for the first time relieved from the dull burden of sorrow which is so intolerable to youth. And who can say with what transport Rob Glen saw this slim black-clad figure detach itself from the shadow of the house? He had come here, as he said to himself, half indignantly, half sullenly, for the last time, to wait for her—the last time he would come and wait—but not on that account would he give up the pursuit of her. She was his—that he would maintain with all his force. He would write to her next day, and ask why she did not come. He would let her feel that he had a claim upon her, that she could not cast him off when she pleased. But in his very vehemence there was a tremor of fear, and it is impossible to describe with what feelings of anxiety he had come, putting his fortune to the touch, meaning that this vigil should be final before he proceeded to "other steps." And how had fortune, nay, providence, rewarded him! Not John this time, not Bell smoothing down her apron, not Jeanie with her pitcher at the well; but slim and fair as a lily in her envelope of gloom, pale with grief and exhaustion, with wet eyes and a pitiful lip, that quivered as she tried to smile at him, at last Margaret was here.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"At last!" He came out from the shadow of the firs and took her hands, and drew her toward him. "At last! my Margaret, my own Margaret! Such a weary time it has been waiting, but this repays all. Say that it is not your doing, darling. You have been kept back; you have not forgotten me, or that I was waiting here?"

"No," she said; "but I did not know you were waiting here. I did not know, even, if I would find you to-night."

"It would have been strange, indeed, if you had not found me. Every evening, as sure as the gloaming came, I have been here waiting for you, Margaret. I did not think you would have kept me so long. But it is not as it used to be between us, when I thought, perhaps, you might cast me off at any moment. I a poor farmer's son, you the young lady of Earl's-hall; but that could not be now; for you are mine, and I am yours."

"It would not have been at any time—for that reason," said Margaret. She was uneasy about the very close proximity he wished for, and avoided his arm. In her great trouble she had not thought of this, but now it troubled and partially shocked her, though she could scarcely tell why. She was roused, however, by the idea that she could have slighted him for any ignoble reason. "It is you that have always been kind to me," she said. "I, who am only a country-girl, and know nothing at all."

"You are a princess," said Rob; "you are a queen to me. My queen and my Margaret; but you will not keep me so long hungering and thirsting out here, far from the light of your sweet countenance? you will not leave me so long again?"

"Oh, Mr. Glen!" said Margaret, "I ought to let you know at once, we are going away."

"Do not, for Heaven's sake, call me Mr. Glen! Do you want to make me very unhappy, to take away all pleasures from me? Surely the time is over in which you should call me Mr. Glen. You cannot want to play with me and make me wretched, Margaret?"

"No," she said, with a tremor in her voice; "I will call you by your name, as I used to do when I was little. But it is quite true that I said—we are going away."

"Going away? Where are you going, and who are *we*? Oh yes, I knew it was not likely they would stay here," cried Rob, with mingled irritation and despair. "Where are they going to take you, my Margaret?—nowhere that I cannot come and see you, nowhere that I will not follow you, my darling. I would go after you to the world's-end."

"I am going with my sisters, Jean and Grace. They are my guardians now. I am to live with them till—for three years at least, till I am twenty-one; then they say I can do what I like. What does it matter now about doing what I like? I do not think I care what becomes of me, now that I have no one, no one that has a right to me! and they will not even let me cry."

She began to weep, and he did not stop her, though his mind was full of impatience. He drew her to him close, and this time she did not resist him.

"Cry there," he said, "Margaret—my Margaret! I will never try to keep you from crying. Oh! he deserved it well. He loved you better than all the earth. You were the light of his eyes, as you are of mine. They! what does it matter to them? They will bother you; they will make you do what they like; they will not worship you as he did, and as I do. But, Margaret, there is still one that has a right to you. Had he known, had I but had the courage to go and tell him everything, he would have given you to me; I am certain he would. He would have thought, like you, that it was better, far better for you, to have some one of your very own. The others! what are you to them? But to him you were everything, and to me you are everything. Margaret! say this, darling! Say, Rob, I am yours; I will always be yours, as you are mine!"

Margaret looked in his face with her wet eyes. But she did not say the words he dictated to her. Her heart was full of emotion of another kind. She was thankful to Rob for his kindness, and he was not like—any one else; he had a special standing-ground of his own with her. To nobody else could she talk as she was talking, on nobody else would she lean; but still it did not occur to her to obey him, to say what he asked her to say.

"I found that picture you made," she said, "only to-day. It is him, just himself. I took it away to my own room that nobody might see it. It must have been some angel that put it into your mind to do that."

"Yes, Margaret," he said, "it was an angel, for it was you. And it was not I that did it, but love that did it; but if you will give it to me, I will make it still more like him. I will never forget how he looked, and how you looked—and my heart all full, and running over with love, which I dared not say."

Alas! there was this peculiarity in the conver-

sation, that while Rob was eager to speak of himself and his love, Margaret, in the most innocent and unwitting way, made it apparent that this was not the subject that interested her most. She was too polite not to listen to him, too grateful and sensitively affected by the curious link between them to show any opposition; but when she could, she turned aside from this subject, which to him was the most interesting subject in heaven or earth; and it is impossible to say how this fact moved Rob, who had never met with anything of the kind before. It piqued him, and it made him more eager. He watched her with an anxiety and impatience which he could scarcely keep in check, while she, with downcast eyes full of tears, pursued that part of the subject which interested her most.

"I should not like it touched," she said; "I would not give it for all the pictures in the world! If I gave it to you, it would be only that it might be put into some case that would preserve it. I have folded it in paper, but that is not enough. I would not give it for all the pictures in the world!"

"Thank you, my darling," he said. "It is something to have done a thing that so pleases you. If you will bring it to me, I will get it put in a case for you. Indeed, it was an angel that put that scene before me; for now when you look at that, and think of *him*, you will think of me too."

"Oh no, Mr. Glen," said Margaret—then she stopped, confused: "I mean, Rob—I am very, very thankful to you. But when I look at that, all the world goes away, and there is only papa leaning back, sleeping. I am glad he was sleeping. He slept a great deal, do you know, before he died. But it was better to see him in his chair, as he used always to be, than in his bed. I don't want any one to see it but myself—other people do not understand it. They would hand it about from one to another, and say, 'Is it not like?' and talk. I could not bear that; I prefer to keep it to myself."

"But you don't mind me seeing it?" he said. "I should not be so unfeeling. Many a time when we are together—when we are married, darling—we will look at it together; and I will make a picture from it, a real picture, with you at my elbow, and it shall be hung in the best place in our house."

At this Margaret winced slightly, but made no remark. She had not the courage to contradict him, to say anything against this strange view; but it disturbed her all the same. Probably it would have to be some time. There seemed a necessity for it, though she could not quite tell why; but as it could not be now, nor for a long time, why should it be spoken of, or brought in to disturb everything? She said, not knowing how to put aside this subject gently, yet to say something all the same: "Jean and Grace are going to take me to the Grange—to my house."

"To *your* house!" Rob felt the blood flush to his face with the excitement of this thought. "I did not know you had a house of your own, Margaret."

"Oh yes; it was my mother's. It is away in England, where I never was. I have seen a picture of it. They say it is very English, with creepers hanging about the walls, roses and

honesuckle, and beautiful great trees. "Jean thinks everything in England is better than anything in Scotland. However pretty it may be, it will never, never be like old gray Earl's-hall."

Rob dropped his arm from her, and hung his head. "What am I thinking of?" he said; "you a great lady, with beautiful houses and lands, and I a poor man, with nothing. I must be mad to think that you could care for me—that you would even think of me at all."

"Mr.—Rob! oh, what must you think of me that you say so? Do I care for money or for a house? Are you going away? Are you going to—leave me? oh!" cried Margaret, penitent, clasping her hands; "did you not know I had a fortune? But what does that matter? You have been kind, very kind to me, thinking I was poor—Rob! are you going to cry, you!—no, don't, don't; you will break my heart! I am calling you by your name now," she said, anxiously, with one hand upon his arm, and with the other pulling down the hand which covered his face. She put her own face close to his in her generous, foolish earnestness—"I am calling you by your name now, Rob; don't hide your face from me, don't go away and leave me. If I am rich, is it not all the better? There will be plenty for us both."

"It makes a difference," he said; and indeed he was able to play his part very well, for never before in his life had Rob been so entirely ashamed of himself. Her very earnestness, she who had been so cool and calm before, her generous trouble and importunity humbled him to the very depths. A man may do a great many things that will not bear examination before he finds himself out; but to act such a falsehood as this—to pretend that he did not know what he knew so much more definitely than she did—to pretend to resist her generous anxiety—to avert his face, and let her woo him, she who had taken his hot wooing with such shy coldness! This made Rob feel himself the most wretched creature, the most despicable, miserable, mercenary wretch. He could not endure himself. Well might he hide his face for a poor swindler and cheat, worse, far worse than he had ever known himself before! To breathe deceitful vows, to say more than he meant, to promise more than he intended to perform, all this was not a thousandth part so bad; for indeed he had always been "in love," when he made love; and a promise more or less, what is that? The common coin of young deceivers. Hitherto Rob had not been bad, only fickle and false. But what was he now? A cheat, a liar, a traitor, unfit to breathe where such innocent creatures were. Thus he played his part very well; his misery was not dissembled; and when he allowed himself to yield to her entreaties, to be moved by the eager eloquence of that soft lip which was so ready to quiver, what vows he made in his heart to be to Margaret something more than ever man had been before!

After this their intercourse was more easy, and by-and-by Rob came to feel that perhaps the momentary fear of losing him (which was how, in his native vulgarity and self-importance, he put it, after a while, to himself) had been a good thing. More than ever now she had committed herself. They wandered about among the trees and talked. They talked of her departure, and

of how he could write to her—which Margaret was half shy again to think of, yet half happy too, a novelty as it was. But she could not tell him how this was to be managed, or how he could come to see her; all was strange, and Jean and Grace were very different from anything she had known in all her previous life.

"They tell me to sit down when I am standing, and to stand up when I am sitting down; they will always have me doing something different," she avowed, though gently, and with a faint sense of humor. But this made it very evident that the life before her would be quite unlike the past. And it did not occur to Margaret that Jean and Grace ought perhaps to be informed of Rob, and the understanding between him and herself. Rob naturally said nothing about this, and to Margaret the thought did not occur. She had no idea of concealment, but simply did not think of her sisters in connection with this "secret," which was something too strange and confusing to herself to be capable of explanation to others, who could not know how it had come about.

"Will you come up to the tower?" said Effie Leslie to Randal Burnside, who had walked home with her from the Manse. Randal had been much about Earl's-hall since Sir Ludovic's death. He had been ready to do anything for the family, and the family had been very willing to employ him. It was a kindness to give him something to do, his mother said, who was glad to throw him in Margaret's way; and the decorousness of the grief which made Mrs. Bellingham and Miss Leslie quite unable to see anybody was put aside on his behalf as well as on his father's. And Margaret and he had grown friends, though she was almost the only one in the house who never gave him any commissions in that moment of bustle. She had never ceased to be grateful to him for calling the doctor when her father's illness began, but she was too independent to have any personal wants to which he could minister, and too shy to have asked his aid if she had. Effie was much more disposed to make use of the young man. She was not unhappy—why should she be, having seen so little of grandpapa? She was a little elated, indeed, to think that mamma was now my lady, and she herself entitled to precedence as a baronet's daughter, and she was very glad to have some one to speak to who did not melt into tears in the middle of the conversation, or say, "Hush, child! remember that this is a house of mourning." The Manse was not a house of mourning, and she liked to go there, and she liked Randal to walk home with her and talk. Lady Leslie was still looking at the brown cow and John's pigsty, and Mrs. Bellingham, as has been said, had a headache. Effie peeped into the West Chamber and the long room, and saw nobody. And then she said, "Have you ever been on the tower, Mr. Burnside? Oh, do come up to the tower."

Randal had climbed the tower a hundred times in former days. He went up the winding stair very willingly, thinking he would have all the better chance of seeing "the others," when the falling night drove them in from their walks. Perhaps "the others" meant only the new Sir Ludovic; perhaps it had another significance: He was interested about Margaret, he allowed to

himself—more interested than he dared let any one know; for had he not almost seen a lover's parting between her and Rob Glen?—a secret knowledge which made him very uneasy. Randal felt that he could not betray them; it would be a base thing in their contemporary—or so, at least, he thought; but he was uneasy. Many thoughts had gone through his mind on this subject. He did not know what to do. The only thing that seemed to him possible was to speak to Rob Glen himself, to represent to him that it was not manly or honorable to engage a girl in Margaret's position, without the knowledge and consent of her friends. But to make such a statement to a young man of your own age, with whom you have not the warrant of friendship for your interference, nor even the warrant of equality, is a difficult thing to do. If Rob, resenting it, could have called him out, there would have been less harm; but that was ridiculous, and what could be done to expiate such an affront? There was nothing to be done, unless he permitted Rob to knock him down, and he did not feel that his forbearance was equal to that. So that Randal remained very uneasy on this subject, and did not know what to do. To let Margaret fall into the hands of a—of Rob Glen, seemed desolation and sacrilege; but what could Randal—who had known them both from his cradle—what could he do between them. Was it his part to *tell*—most despicable of all offices in the opinion of youth? This train of uneasy thought was brought back when Effie looked into the little white-panelled sitting-room, the West Chamber, where Margaret, he knew, spent most of her time. She liked it better than the long room, every nook of which was so full of her father's memory; and the ladies humored her, and, small as it was, made the West Chamber their centre. Where was she, if she was not there? Possibly out-of-doors in the soft evening, confiding all her griefs to Rob Glen. Possibly it was the thought that Randal himself would have liked to have those griefs confided to him, and to act the part of comforter, that made his blood burn at this imagination. So soon after her father's death! He felt disposed to despise Margaret too.

"Go softly just here," said Effie, whispering; "for there is Aunt Jean's room, and we must not do anything to disturb her headache. It is a very good thing, you know, that she has a headache sometimes: even Aunt Grace says so—for otherwise she would wear herself out. Perhaps it is a little too late for the view, but the sky was still full of glow when we came in. Ah! it is very dark up here; but now there is only another flight. Oh no, it is not too late for the view," Effie cried, her young voice coming out soft yet ringing, as they emerged into the open air. "Nobody can hear us here," she said, with a laugh; for at seventeen it is not easy to be serious all day, especially when it is only a grandfather, nothing more, who is dead.

It was not too late for the view, and the view was not a view to be despised. There does not seem much beauty to spare in the east of Fife. Low hills, great breadths of level fields: the sea a great expanse of blue or leaden gray, fringed with low reefs of dark rocks, like the teeth of some hungry monster, dangerous and grim without being picturesque, without a ship to break

its monotony. But yet, with those limitless breadths of sky and cloud, the wistful clearness and golden after-glow, and all the varying blueness of the hills, it would have been difficult to surpass the effect of the great amphitheatre of sea and land of which this solitary gray old house formed the centre. The hill, behind which the sun had set, is scarcely considerable enough to have a name; but it threw up its outline against the wonderful greenness, blueness, goldenness of the sky with a grandeur which would not have misbecome an Alp. Underneath its shelter, gray and sweet, lay the soft levels of Stratheden in all their varying hues of color—green corn, and brown earth, and red fields of clover, and dark belts of wood. Behind were the two paps of the Lomonds, rising green against the clear serene, and on the other side entwining lines of hills, with gleams of golden light breaking through the mists, clearing here and there as far as the mysterious Grampians, far off under Highland skies.

This was one side of the circle; and the other was the sea, a sea still blue under the faint evening skies, in which the young moon was rising; the yellow sands of Forfarshire on one hand, stretching downward from the mouth of the Tay—the low brown cliffs and green headlands bending away on the other toward Fifeness—and the great bow of water reaching to the horizon between. Nearer the eye, showing half against the slope of the coast and half against the water, rose St. Andrews on its cliff, the fine dark tower of the College Church poised over the little city, the jagged ruins of the Castle marking the outline, the Cathedral rising majestic in naked pathos; and old St. Rule, homely and weather-beaten, oldest venerable pilgrim of all, standing strong and steady, at watch upon the younger centuries. This was the view at that time from Earl's-hall. It is a little less noble now, because of the fine, vulgar, comfortable gray stone houses which have got themselves built everywhere since, and spoiled one part of the picture; but all the rest will remain forever, Heaven be praised. The little wood of Earls-hall, pinched and ragged with the wind, lay immediately below, and the flat Eden, with its homely green lines of bank on either side, lighted up by here and there a sand-bank; but the tide was out, and the Eden meandered in a desert of wet brown sand, and was not lovely. The two young people did not speak for a moment. They were moved, in spite of themselves, by all this perfect vault of sky, and perfect round of earth and sea. It is not often that you can see the great world in little, field and mountain, sunset and moonrise, land and sea, at one glance. They were silenced for sixty seconds; and then Effie Leslie drew a long breath and began to chatter again.

"Well!" she said, with as much expression as the simple word was capable of bearing, "I don't think I should like to sell this old house where the family has been so long, if I were papa!"

"I would not sell it, if it were mine, for anything that could be offered me!" cried Randal, in the enthusiasm of the moment. Effie shook her head.

"Perhaps not, Mr. Burnside; but then you would not have ten children—or nine at least; for now Gracie is married she does not count.

But oh, I wish we could keep Earl's-hall! It must be very pleasant to live where everybody knows you, and knows exactly what you are—that is, if you are anybody. Poor Margaret will not like leaving, but then she is a lucky girl; she is an heiress; she has a house of her own; and I dare say she will get very fond of that when she knows it. Do you think I ought to call her *Aunt Margaret, Mr. Burnside?*”

Effie's laugh rang out so merrily as she said this, that she checked herself with a little alarm.

“Suppose Aunt Jean should hear me!” she said; and then, after a pause, “Oh! look straight down, straight down under the fir-trees, Mr. Burnside. Oh, this is more interesting than the view! A pair of—”

“Do you think it is quite honorable to look at them?” said Randal. He had a presentiment who it must be.

“Oh, it can't be anybody we know,” said light-hearted Effie.

Far down in the wood, under the firs, no doubt the lovers felt themselves perfectly safe; but there were treacherous groups of trees, whose branches had been swept in one direction by the wind, laying bare the two who stood beneath. They were standing close together, holding each other's hands.

“The girl is crying, I think,” said Effie, “and leaning against the man. What can be the matter? can they have quarrelled? and she is all in black, with a thick veil—”

“Come to this side,” said Randal, hastily, “there is a break in the mist. I think I can show you *Schehallion*.”

“I like this better than *Schehallion*,” said Effie; and then she started and cried, “O-oh!” with a long breath; and suddenly blushing all over, looked Randal in the face.

“I think *Schehallion* is much the most interesting to look at,” he said, and, touching her elbow with his hand, endeavored to lead her away. But Effie was too much startled to conceal her wonder and alarm.

“Oh, Mr. Burnside! you are not thinking of *Schehallion*, you only want to get me away. I believe you know who *he* is.”

“I don't know who either is, and I don't want to know,” cried Randal; “and I think, Miss Leslie, I must bid you good-night.”

That was easy enough; but Effie did not budge, though Randal went away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EFFIE was not a tell-tale, and she was fond of her young aunt; but still this was such a revelation as made the blood stand still in her veins. She was deeply, profoundly interested, and strained her eyes to make out “the gentleman.” Who could he be? Effie felt almost certain Mr. Burnside knew, and almost certain Mr. Burnside had seen them before, and was their confidant, or he would not have been so anxious to call her attention to *Schehallion*. *Schehallion*! nothing but a hill—whereas this was a romance! She leaned over the parapet of the tower till the night grew so dark that she took fright and felt disposed to cry for help, never thinking, unaccustomed to it as she was,

that she could grope her way in safety down the spiral stair. But she did manage it, partly fortified by a generous determination not to make any noise near Aunt Jean's room, which might end in a betrayal of the lovers. Effie would have gone to the stake rather than betray the lovers to Aunt Jean. But her mother was a different matter. She knew she could not go to bed with a secret from her mother; and perhaps it was not right, was it quite right, of Margaret? Effie reflected, however, as she stumbled down in the dark to the West Chamber, where John had just placed candles (the inspection of the pigsty being over), that perhaps grandpapa had known all about it; most likely Margaret had told him—and she had no need to tell any one else. But to meet a—gentleman, in the wood! It was the most strange, and most exciting, and most wonderful thing in real life which Effie had ever seen with her own eyes. She crept in to the West Chamber, where Miss Leslie had just come, relieved of her attendance on her sister.

“Your dear Aunt Jean is a little better,” she said, “dear Effie; and where is dearest Margaret, and your dear papa and mamma? Dear Jean has gone to bed, she will not come down to-night. And had you a pleasant walk, my love? And how is dear Mrs. Burnside?”

All these dears put Effie out of breath; and she had been out of breath before, with the shock she had got, and with her progress downstairs: for a very narrow spiral stair which you are not familiar with is rather alarming, when it is quite dark. Effie, however, made what breathless answer she could, and sat down in a corner, getting some work to conceal her burning cheeks from Aunt Grace's gaze, and forgetting altogether that Aunt Grace was short-sighted, and saw nothing when she had not her spectacles on, which she did not wear when she was knitting. Miss Leslie, however, very glad to have a listener, and to have *la parole* in the absence of her sister, talked, without requiring any answer, straight on, flowing in a gentle stream, and gave Effie no trouble; and the girl sat turning her back to the light, and watching very keenly who should come in next. The first was her mother, placid and fresh from the cool air, saying it was very pleasant out-of-doors after having been in the house all day; and then, after an interval, Margaret followed, very pale, with her eyes red, and her hat, with its heavy veil, in her hand.

“Have you been out too, my dear?” said Lady Leslie. “I wonder we did not see you; your brother and I have been taking a walk.”

“Yes,” said Margaret, “I saw you; I was in the wood. I always go to the wood.”

“I don't think it is at all a good place,” said Aunt Grace, “a damp place; and no doubt you will have been standing about, or even sitting down upon the moss and grass. Your dear Aunt Jean—no, I forgot, she is not your dear aunt, darling Margaret, but your dear sister—it is so strange to have a dear sister so young—She is better, but she has gone to bed; that is why you see me here alone. Dear Effie has been a good child; she has been sitting, talking to me, while you have been out, dear Mary, with dearest Ludovie, and while dear Margaret has been out. But about the wood, darling Margaret; you must go and change your shoes di-

rectly. Dear Jean would never forgive me if I did not make you go and change your shoes."

"They are not wet," cried Margaret, going to the other corner opposite to Effie, who gazed at her with the eagerest curiosity; but Effie was much more like the heroine of a love-story than Margaret, and the little girl's heart was sore for her young aunt. She had no mother to go to and tell, and how could she tell Aunt Jean? As for Aunt Grace, that might be possible, perhaps; but then Aunt Jean would be told directly, and there would be no fun. These were Effie's thoughts, sitting with her back to the light, so that nobody might see the excitement in her scarlet cheeks; but Margaret did not seem excited at all. She was quite quiet and still, though she was obstinate about changing her shoes. Oh, Effie thought, if I could only lend her mamma! but then you cannot lend a mother. There was nothing to be done but to pity the poor girl, who had nobody to breathe the secret of her heart to, except Aunt Jean and Aunt Grace.

That night, however, after all the ladies had gone up-stairs, Lady Leslie appeared again in her dressing-gown in the long room, where her husband was sitting at his father's table. The room was dark, except in the small space lighted by his lamp; and if the good man, though he had not much imagination, was startled by the sight of the white figure coming toward him through the dimness, he may be forgiven, so soon after a death in the family. When he saw who it was, he recovered his calm, and drew a chair for her to the table.

"Is it you, my dear?" he said; "you gave me a fright for the moment." He thought she had some new light on the subject of the house; and as it was a matter of great thought to him, and they had not been able to come to any decision on the subject, he was very glad to see her. "I hope you have thought of some other expedient," he said, "I can make neither head nor tail of it." How was it likely he could think of anything but this very troublesome and knotty problem of their own?

"No indeed, Ludovic," said Lady Leslie, "I have no new light; and what I came to speak about is a new fash for you. No, nothing about the children, they are all right, thank God! But when I went to say good-night to Effie, I found her with red cheeks and such bright eyes, that I felt sure something was the matter."

"Not fever?" he said. "It was all quite right, in a sanitary point of view—far better than most old houses, the surveyor told me."

"No, no, not fever: when I told you it was nothing about the children! But I don't know what to do about it, Ludovic. It is poor little Margaret. Effie told me—the monkey to know anything about such things! that standing by accident on the tower, looking down upon the wood, she saw—"

"You and me, my dear, taking our walk; that was simple enough."

"No, not you and me; but two people under the big silver fir—Margaret and—a gentleman; there is no use mincing the matter. By what Effie saw, a lover, Ludovic! Well, you need not get up in a passion, it may be no harm. It may be somebody your father knew of. We are all strangers to her, poor little thing. There may

be nothing to blame in it. Only I don't know what gentleman it can be near this, for it was not Randal Burnside."

"How do you know it was not Randal Burnside?" said Sir Ludovic, rising and pacing about the room, in much fuss and fret, as his wife had feared. "No, but it could not be. He is too honorable a fellow."

"Mind, Ludovic, we don't know it is not as honorable as anything can be; your father might have sanctioned it. I would lay my life upon Margaret that she is a good girl. It cannot be more than imprudent at the worst, if it is that."

"She should be whipped," said her brother; "a little light-headed thing! not a fortnight since my father died!"

Sir Ludovic, though his blood was as good as any king's, was a homely Scotsman, and the dialect of his childhood returned to him when his mind was disturbed, as happens sometimes even in this cosmopolitan age.

"Whisht, whisht, Loodie!" said his wife. "She is a poor little motherless girl, and my heart bleeds for her—and I cannot bear to say anything to Jean. Jean would interfere with a strong hand, and make everything worse. If we only knew who it was! for I can think of no gentleman of these parts, unless it was one of the young men that are always staying with Sir Claude."

At this her husband started and gave a long whew-w! of suspicion and consternation. "I know who it is," he said—"I know who it is!" and began to walk about the room more than ever. Then he told his wife of his encounter with Rob Glen; and the circumstances seemed to fit so exactly that Lady Leslie could but hold up her hands in pain and horror.

"No doubt my father was foolish about it," said Sir Ludovic. "It is true that he used to have him here to dinner; it is true that he made a sketch of the house, spending days upon it. John says he always disapproved, but my father had taken a fancy to the young man. Rob Glen—I know all about him—the widow's son that has the little farm at Earl's-lee: a stickit minister, John says, an artist—a forward, confident fellow, as I saw from the way he addressed me; and, by-the-way, I met Margaret coming in just before I met him. That makes it certain. It is just Rob Glen, and no gentleman of these parts: not even an artist of the better sort from Sir Claude's—a clodpole, a lout, a common lad—"

"Oh, Ludovic!" Lady Leslie shivered, and covered her face with her hands; "but if your father took him up and had him about the house, Margaret was not to blame. If he is, as you say, 'a stickit minister,' he must have some education; and if he could draw your poor father, he must be clever. And probably he has the air of a gentleman—"

"I took him for a pushing forward fellow." "And how was the child to know? Good-looking, very likely, and plenty of confidence, as you say; and she a poor little innocent girl knowing nothing, with nobody to look after her! Oh, Ludovic, you will not deserve to have so many sweet daughters of your own, if you are not very tender to poor Margaret; and if you can, oh, say nothing to Jean!"

"It is Jean's business," said Ludovic; but he

was pleased that his wife should think him more capable than his sister. "Jean thinks he can do everything better than anybody else," he said; "but what is to be done? I will speak to *him*. I will tell him he has taken a most unfair advantage of an ignorant girl. I will tell him it's a most dishonorable action—"

"Oh, Ludovic, listen to me a little! How do you know that it is dishonorable? I incline to think your father sanctioned it. But speak to Margaret first. You are her brother, though you might be her father; and remember, poor thing, she has never had a mother. Speak to her gently; you have too kind a heart to be harsh. Tell her how unsuitable it is, and how young she is, not able to judge for herself. But don't abuse him, or she will take his part. Tell her—"

"I wish you would tell her yourself, Mary. You could manage that part of the matter much better than I."

"But she is not my flesh and blood," said Lady Leslie. "She might not think I had any right to interfere."

And the decision they came to, after a lengthened consultation, was that Sir Ludovic should have a conversation with Margaret next morning, and ascertain how far things had gone, and persuade her to give up so unsuitable a connection; but that if she were obdurate, he should try his powers upon Rob, who might, perhaps, be brought to see that the transaction was not to his credit; and in any case the affair was to be kept, if possible, from the knowledge of the aunts, who henceforward would have the charge of Margaret. Sir Ludovic's calculations were all put out, however, by this troublesome piece of business, and Lady Leslie shook her head as she went away through the long room and up the dark stair, a white figure, with her candle in her hand.

"Papa will speak to Margaret to-morrow," she said, going into her daughter's room as she passed, "and we hope she will see what is right. But you must take great care never to breathe a word of this, Effie, for I am most anxious to keep it all from Aunt Jean."

"But oh, mamma, what will happen if she will not give him up? and who can it be?" said Effie. Lady Leslie did not think it necessary to make any further revelations to her daughter. She said, "Go to sleep, dear," and gave her a kiss, and took away the light. And shortly after, Ludovic, disturbed in all his thoughts (though they were much more important, he could not but feel, than any nonsense about a lassie and her sweetheart), tramped heavily up-stairs, also with his candle, shedding glimmers of light through all the window-slits as he passed; and silence and darkness fell once more over the house.

But Sir Ludovic had a face of care when he made his appearance next day. The sense of what he had got to do hung heavy on his soul. Though his wife had entreated him not to be harsh, it was not of cruelty, but of weak indulgence, that the good man felt himself most capable. He almost hoped the girl would be saucy and impertinent, to put him on his mettle; but one glance at Margaret's pale, subdued child's face, which had been so happy and bright a little while ago, made this appear impossible. If only his wife could have done it! But he supposed Mary was right, and that it was "his place" to do it. How many disagreeable things, he re-

flected, it is a man's "place" to do when he is the head of a family! He did not feel that the dignity of the place made up for its troubles. If Mary would only do it herself! And Mrs. Bellingham had emerged as fresh as ever after the little retirement of yesterday. Her headache was quite gone, she was glad to say. It was so much better just to give in at once, and go to bed, and then you were as right as possible next day. She was able for anything now, Jean said. Sir Ludovic gave his wife an appealing glance across the table. Jean would enjoy doing this, she would do it a great deal better than he should; but Lady Leslie paid no attention to these covert appeals. Mrs. Bellingham was in better spirits, she allowed, than she had been since papa's death. "Indeed, it would be wicked for us to grieve over that very bitterly, though great allowance must be made for Margaret; for he was an old man, and life had ceased to be any pleasure to him."

"Dearest papa!" said Miss Leslie, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

"But here is a letter from my nephew, Aubrey Bellingham," said Jean. "I think you have met him, Ludovic—a very fine young fellow, and one I put the greatest trust in. He is to be at Edinburgh to-day, and to-morrow he is coming on here. I am sure good Mrs. Burnside will not mind giving him a bed. He has come to take us home, or to go anywhere with us, if we prefer that. It is such a comfort on a long, troublesome journey, with a languid party, to have a gentleman."

"I should have thought you were very well used to the journey," said Lady Leslie.

"So I am; and it is nothing with only Grace and myself; but three ladies, and one a very inexperienced traveller—I am too glad to have Aubrey's help. My spirits might not be equal to it, and my strength is not what it once was—"

"No, indeed, dear Jean," said Miss Grace; "those who knew you a few years ago would scarcely recog—"

"And Aubrey is invaluable about travelling. I never saw a man so good; for one thing I have very much trained him myself; he has gone about with me since he was quite a little fellow. I used to make him take the tickets, and then he got advanced to looking after the luggage. To be sure, he once made us a present of his beautiful new umbrella, letting the guard put it into our carriage; but that was a trifle. I think, as he has come, we must settle to go in a day or two, Mary. This just gives me the courage to go. I should have lingered on, not able to make up my mind to tear ourselves away from a spot—"

"Where we have been so unhappy." Miss Leslie took advantage of the moment when Mrs. Bellingham took up her cup of coffee. A mouthful of anything, especially when it is hot, is an interruption perforce of the most eloquent speech.

"It will be better for us all, and better for Margaret, not to linger here," said Jean. "Poor child! she will never do any good till we get her away. Yes, you will suffer, Margaret, but believe me, it is real consideration for your good—real anxiety for you. Ask Mary; she will tell you the same thing. Earl's-hall will never be the same to you again. You must begin your

new life sometime or other, and the sooner the better, Margaret. Would you like to go to the Highlands and see a little of the country? or shall we go straight to the Grange at once? Now that Aubrey is to be with us, it is quite the same for my comfort; and we will do, my love, what you like best."

"Oh, I do not care about anything," said Margaret, "whatever, whatever you please."

"That is very natural, my dear," said Lady Leslie, "and Jean is right, though perhaps it sounds hard. Effie and I will miss you dreadfully, Margaret, but the change is the best thing for you. If you go to the Highlands, would you like Effie to go too, for company?" said the kind woman. But Margaret could not speak for crying, and Jean and Grace did not seem delighted with the suggestion.

"It will be best for her to make the break at once," said Mrs. Bellingham. "Effie can come after; we shall be most happy to see her when we are settled at the Grange."

"I dare say you are right," said Effie's mother; but this rejection of the offer, which she knew to be so kind on her own part, of her daughter's company made her heart colder to poor Margaret than all the story about Rob Glen.

Ludovic put his hand on his little sister's shoulder as she was leaving the breakfast-table.

"Will you come out with me and take a little walk about the place, Margaret? I want to say something to you," he said.

"What is that?" said Mrs. Bellingham. "I suppose, Ludovic, you would like me to come too? I will get on my hat in a moment; indeed Margaret can fetch it when she brings her own. A turn in the morning is always pleasant. Run away, my dear, and bring our hats; the air will do us both good."

"But I wanted your advice," said Lady Leslie—"yours and Grace's; there are still some things to settle. These laces, for instance, which we were to look over."

"That is true," said Mrs. Bellingham. "But I am afraid it will be a disappointment to Ludovic; and then, of course, it is necessary I should be there if he has really something to say to Margaret."

"Let me go, dear Jean," said Grace; "I will not mind, indeed I will not mind *much*, being away, and the lace could never be settled without you. I am not so clever about knowing the kinds, and I am sure you will not forget that I am fond of it *too*."

"Does Margaret want a chaperon when she goes out with me?" said Ludovic. "It is only to put a little color in her cheeks." But he was not clever at these little social artifices, and looked once more at his wife.

"Leave him alone with his girls," said Lady Leslie; "a man is always fond of a walk with girls. Get your hat, Margaret, my dear, and you too, Effie, and take a run with him. He will like that a great deal better than you and me, Jean. We are very well in our way, but he likes the young things, and who will blame him? and we will settle about the lace before they come in."

"There is no accounting for tastes," Mrs. Bellingham said; "but if there is anything particular, it will be better to wait till I can be with

you, Ludovic; and, Margaret, put on your galloches, for it rained last night."

"You can take mine, dear," whispered Grace, who knew that Margaret did not possess these necessary articles. And thus, at last, the party got under way. Effie, warned by her mother, deserted them as soon as her aunts were safe in the high room, and Margaret, without any foreboding of evil, went out with her brother peacefully into the morning. It was very damp after the rain, as Mrs. Bellingham had divined, and cost her some trouble to keep her crape unsoiled. But except for that care, and that there was some excitement in her mind to hear of the speedy departure from Earl's-hall, Margaret went out with Ludovic, with great confidence in his kindness and without any fear.

CHAPTER XXV.

"I SAID to Jean it was nothing, for I did not care to mix her up with it; but I have something very serious to say to you, Margaret," said Sir Ludovic.

She looked up at him with eyes wistful, yet candid, fearing nothing still. The character of Margaret's face seemed to have changed within the last month. What she was in June was not like what she was in July. The trouble she had gone through had not seemed to develop, but to subdue her. She had been full of variety, animation, and energy before. Now the life seemed to have sunk to so low an ebb in her palid being, exhausted with tears, that there was little remaining but simple consciousness and intelligence. She did not seem able to originate anything on her own side, not even a question. A half smile, the reflection of a smile, came to her face, and she looked up, without any alarm, for what her brother had to say.

"Margaret," he said (how hard it was! harder even than he thought. He cleared his throat, and a rush of uncomfortable color came to his middle-aged countenance, though she took it so calmly, and did not blush at all)—"Margaret, I have found out something, my dear, that gives me a great deal of pain—something about you."

But even this solemn preamble seemed to convey no thrill of conscious guilt to Margaret's mind. She only looked at him again a little more earnestly. "Have I lost my—money?" she said.

"No, it is not that. What made you think of losing your money?"

"It often happens, does it not?" she said. "I am sure I should not care."

"Oh yes, you would care—we should all care; but your money is safe enough. I wish you yourself were as safe. Margaret, my dear, give me your full attention; you were seen last night in the wood."

"Yes!" she said, a little alarmed.

"With a—gentleman; or at least, let us hope he was a gentleman," said Ludovic. "You know that it is not—usual, nor perhaps—right. I want you to tell me all about it: and first of all, who was the man?"

Margaret was taken entirely by surprise. It had not occurred to her to think of Rob Glen as one about whom she could be questioned. He

had grown so familiar while her father lived, and he had been so kind. There was no sort of novelty about it—nothing to be thus solemnly questioned about. But she looked up at her brother with startled eyes.

“Oh, Ludovic, the gentleman—”

“Yes; don’t be frightened for me, my poor little sister, I will not be unkind; but tell me truly, everything. You must not keep back anything, Margaret.”

“I don’t know, perhaps, if—you would call him a gentleman,” said Margaret, the color beginning to rise in her pale face. Keep back nothing! Would she have to tell him all they had said? Her heart began to beat faster. “It is Rob Glen, Ludovic; perhaps you remember him long ago, when he was a boy. I used to go fishing with him; he was very kind to me. Bell always says—”

“Yes—yes; it does not matter about children; but you are not a child now, Margaret. Have you always kept on such—intimate terms with Rob Glen?”

Margaret winced, and her face began to burn. He seemed to himself to be speaking brutally to her; but what else could he say?

“I did not see him at all for a long time,” she said; “and then he came back. He always said he was not—as good as we were. But do you think it all depends upon where you are born? You can’t help where you are born.”

“No; but you must be content with it, and keep to your own place,” said Ludovic, an argument which did not make much impression on his own mind.

“But he is very clever; he can draw most beautifully,” said Margaret. “The first time he came—it was—papa that said he might come.”

The name brought with it, as was natural, a sob; and Ludovic, horribly compunctious, patted his little sister on the shoulder with a kind and lingering hand.

“He made a picture of *him*,” cried Margaret, half inarticulate, struggling with the “climbing sorrow.” “Oh, Loodie! I found it just yesterday; it is *him*, his very self.”

“My poor little Margaret! don’t think me cruel,” said the good man, with a break in his voice. “I must hear.”

“Yes, Ludovic. He used to come often, and sometimes would cheer him up and make him laugh. And he grew—a great friend. Then, when *he* was ill, when I went out to cry—I could not cry when everybody was there.”

“My poor child!”

“That was the first time I met him in the wood. He was very, very kind. I—could do nothing but cry.”

Ludovic took her hand into his, and held it between his own. He was beginning to understand.

“I see how it was,” he said, his voice not so steady as at first. “I see exactly how it was; and I don’t blame you, my dear. But, Margaret, has he taken advantage of this? Has he got you to promise—to marry him? Is that what he talks to you about? Forget I am an old man, old to the like of you—or rather think that I am your father, Margaret.”

“No, no,” she said, “you are not that; no one will ever be that again; but you are very

kind. My father—would have been pleased to see how kind you are.”

“God knows—and my poor father too, if he knows anything of what he’s left behind him—that I want to be kind to you, as kind as he could have been, my poor little Margaret. Tell me then, dear, has this young man spoken of marriage to you, and love?”

“Of love? oh yes!” said Margaret, drooping her head. “I am not sure about the other. He was for going away yesterday when I told him I had a fortune; and I had to tell him myself that was no reason for going away, that there would be plenty for us both.”

“Does that mean that you promised to marry him, Margaret?”

“I do not know,” she said, slowly; “I did not think of that. I suppose, when you come to think of it”—the color had all gone out of her face, and she was quite pale again, and letting the words fall more and more slowly—“when you come to think of it, though I never did stop to think—that is what it would mean.”

There was a touch of regret in her tone, a weary acknowledgment of necessity, but no blushing pride or fervor. It had not occurred to her before; but being put to her, it must, no doubt, mean that. She did not look at her brother, but at the ground; but not to hide any happy flush of consciousness. Ludovic was half bewildered, half irritated by her calm.

“But, Margaret,” he cried, “you cannot think what you are saying. This must be put a stop to; it must be brought to an end! it is monstrous; it is impossible! My dear, you cannot really have the least idea what you are doing. Giving yourself up to the first fortune-hunter that appears—a vulgar fellow without a penny, without even the position of a gentleman. He has taken a base advantage of your youth and your trouble. It must be put a stop to,” he said. He had dropped her hand and withdrawn from her side, and was crushing the damp grass under his feet with all those frettings and fidgetings of embarrassment and irritation of which his wife was afraid.

Margaret had looked up at him again. She was quite quiet, but as steady as a statue.

“How can it be put a stop to?” she said.

“He is not what you say, Ludovic; he is very kind.”

“Margaret! are you in love with him?” cried her brother; “is that what you mean?”

A slight color wavered over Margaret’s face.

“It is he that is—that,” she said, softly.

This gave Ludovic, ignorant man, courage.

“Heaven be praised if it is only he! I would make short work with him. The only difficulty would be to make you unhappy. My dear, I will see him this very day, and you shall never be troubled with him any more.”

“He has not been a trouble at all, Ludovic. I cannot tell you how kind he was; and yesterday again he was very kind. He would have gone away if I had let him, but I would not let him.”

“Now that you see how serious it is, my dear,” said Ludovic, “you will let him now? I will go and see him at once. I will lose no time. Go you back to the house, and don’t say anything to Jean. Speak to Mary, if you like, but not to Jean; and don’t give yourself any

more trouble about it, my dear; I will manage it all."

But Margaret did not move; she stood very steadily, all the trembling gone away from her, the tears dried from her cheeks, and her eyes shining. These eyes were still fixed on the ground, and her head was drooping, but she showed no other signs of emotion.

"Ludovic," she said, slowly, "it is a mistake you are making; it cannot be settled so easily. Indeed, it would be better just to let it alone," she added, after a pause.

"Let it alone!" cried Sir Ludovic; "that is just the thing that cannot be done."

Margaret put out her hand and touched his arm. She raised her head with a slight, proud elevation, unlike anything that had been seen in it before.

"You must not meddle with me," she said, with a wistful look, half warning, half entreating.

"But I must meddle with you, my dear. You must not go to your ruin; you cannot be allowed to go."

"Don't meddle with me, Ludovic! I have never been meddled with. You need not think I will do anything wrong."

"I must act according to my judgment, Margaret. You are too young to know what you are doing. I must save you from this adventurer. You do not even care about him. I know how a girl looks when she is in love: not as you do, Margaret, thank God for it; and that is the one thing of any importance. I must interfere."

"I do not want to be disobedient," she said; "but, Ludovic, you know there must be some things that are my own. You cannot judge for me always, nor Jean either. And whatever you may say about this, I will not do it; anything else! but about this I will not do it. It is very, very difficult to say so, when you are so kind; but I cannot, and do not bid me, Ludovic; oh, do not bid me, for I will not!" she said.

"But if I tell you you must!" He was entirely out of patience. What fantastic piece of folly was this that had made her set herself against him like a rock? He was beyond his own control with impatience and irritation. "I hope you will not drive me to say something I will be sorry for," he said. "You, Margaret, who have always been a good girl, and you don't even care for this young man!"

"He cares," said Margaret, under her breath.

"Is that why you resist me?" cried her brother. "He cares! yes, for your money, you foolish girl—for what you have got; because he will be able to live and think himself a gentleman!"

"Ludovic!" she cried, her face growing crimson; "but you are only angry; you don't mean to be so unkind."

And then he stopped short, touched, in the midst of his anger, by the simplicity of her confidence.

"Do you mean to tell me—that you are really going to marry—Rob Glen, Margaret?"

"Oh! but not for such a long, long time!" she said.

What was he to say to her—a girl so simple, so almost childish, so unyielding? If Mary had only done it herself! probably she would have had some means of insight into this strange, subtle girl's mechanism which was out of his way. What was reason, argument, common-sense, to

a creature like this, who refused to abandon her lover, and yet drew a long breath of relief at the thought that it must be "a long, long time" before he could claim her? Sir Ludovic was at his wit's end. They had been walking up and down in front of the house, where, out of reach of all the windows, their conversation was quite safe. The grassy path was damp, but it was noiseless, affording no interruption to their talk. On the ruined gable the tall wall-flowers were nodding, and the ivy threw a little shower of rain-drops over them whenever the wind blew. Looking up at that ruined gable reminded him of all his own cares, so much more important than this love nonsense. Should he ever be able to rebuild it? But in the mean time he must not think of this question at all, but address himself to the still more difficult subject of Rob Glen.

When the conversation, however, had come to this pass, beyond which it seemed so difficult to carry it, an interruption occurred. A lumbering old hackney-carriage, well known in the country, which carried everybody to and from the station, of the few who wanted any other means of conveyance but their own legs or their own carriage—and there were not many people of this intermediate class in Strathead—suddenly swung in heavily at the gate, and sinking deep in the rut, which it went to Ludovic's heart to see, disfiguring the muddy road through the scanty trees, which called itself the avenue—came laboring toward them. There was a portmanteau on the outside of this vehicle, and somebody within, who thrust out his head as he approached, reconnoitring the curious old gray house. When he saw the two figures advancing from the other side, he called to the driver and leaped out. It was a young man, fair and fashionable, and spotless in apparel, with a beardless but not boyish face, an eyeglass in his eye and a great-coat on his arm.

"Excuse me," he said, "I am sure that I am speaking to—"

While at the same time Ludovic Leslie, leaving Margaret, upon whom the stranger had already fixed a very decided gaze, went forward, saying,

"Aubrey Bellingham—how do you do? My sister told us she expected you to-day."

"Yes," said the young man, "here I am. I came up as soon as I got her summons. It is a fine thing to have nothing to do, for then one is always at the call of one's friends. May I be presented to—Miss Leslie? whom I have heard of so often. As I am about to enter her service, don't you think I should know her at once when good-fortune throws me in her way?"

"Only Miss Margaret Leslie, Bellingham. You understand, Margaret, that this is Jean's nephew, whom she was speaking of this morning. I don't know what he means by entering your service, but perhaps he can explain that himself."

The stranger gave Margaret a very keen look of examination—not the chance glance of an ordinary meeting, nor yet the complimentary surprise of sudden admiration of a pretty face. The look meant a great deal more than this, and might have confused Margaret if she had not been far beyond noticing anything of the kind. He seemed to look, try, judge all in a moment, and the keen, sudden inspection struck Sir Ludovic, though he was not very swift to mark such

undercurrents of meaning. It seemed to take a long time, so searching and thorough was it; and yet almost before Ludovic's voice had ceased to vibrate, Bellingham replied,

"I believe I am to be the courier of the party, which is the same as entering Miss Leslie's service. My aunts are used to me. Miss Leslie, it is a very quaint relationship this of yours to my aunts. I call both your sisters by that endearing title."

"I hope you don't mean to make my little sister into Aunt Margaret," said Sir Ludovic. "Perhaps, my dear, you had better go and tell Jean of Mr. Bellingham's arrival. I don't know what you will think," he added, escaping with some relief, as Margaret hurried away, into the more habitual current of his thoughts, "of my tumble-down old house."

"It is a most curious old house," said the stranger; "I can see that already. I have been studying it all the time; fifteenth century, do you suppose? Domestic architecture is always a little bewildering. I know there are people who can read it like a church, but I don't pretend to be clever about it. It always puzzles me."

"No doubt it is puzzling, when you know only a little about it," said Ludovic, who knew nothing at all.

"That is just my case," said the other, cheerfully. "I have been taught just a little of most things. It is very unsatisfactory. Indeed, to have the reputation of a handy man in a large family party is ruin to everything. You can neither work nor study; and when you are cursed, in addition, with a little good-nature—"

"A large share of that," Sir Ludovic said, chiefly because it seemed to him the only thing to say; and it was very good-natured, indeed, for a young man, a man so entirely *comme il faut*, and looking more like Pall Mall than Earl's-hall, to come when his aunt called him so readily. Ludovic knew he himself would not have done it for any number of old ladies, but then he had always had his profession to think of; and how many things he had at this moment to think of! Thank Heaven, at least he had got rid of Margaret's affairs for the moment. Let Mary put her own brains to work and see what she could make of it. For himself, there was a certain relief in the sight of a new face. In the mean time, while Sir Ludovic's mind was thus condoling with itself, the new arrival had paid his cab, and seen his portmanteau handed over to John, who had made his appearance at the sound of the wheels.

"For some things, sir," said young Bellingham, peering at John through his eyeglass, "this is a delightful country. Fancy your old butler, who looks an archbishop at least, meekly carrying off my portmanteau! If he had been on the other side of the Tweed, he would have looked at it helplessly, and requested to know what he was supposed to have to do with such an article."

"John is not used to much grandeur," said Sir Ludovic, not knowing whether this was complimentary or depreciation; "a man-of-all-work about a homely Scotch country-house is not like one of your pampered menials in the South. Did you have a good crossing at the Ferry?"

There are times when the Ferry at Burntisland is not much more agreeable than the worse ferry at Dover, and it was always a civil question—though privately he thought that a little tossing, or even a little sea-sickness, would not have done any harm to this spruce gentleman. Ludovic felt plainer, rustier, in his old black coat, which had seen much service at his office, since this carefully dressed young hero had dawned upon the horizon. He felt instinctively that he did not like him; though nothing could be more cheerful or friendly than Mr. Aubrey Bellingham. He was good enough to explain the house to its master as they went in, and told him why the screen wall between the two blocks of building existed, and all about it. Ludovic was so startled that he found nothing to reply; he had even a little heraldic lecture upon his own coat-of-arms over the door.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THERE was quite a cheerful flutter of talk at the luncheon-table in the long room. Sir Ludovic had never much to say, and his wife was very anxious to know the result of his interview with Margaret, and Effie was shy, and Margaret herself perfectly silent. But the rapid interchange of question and answer between Mrs. Bellingham and her nephew made the most lively commotion, and stirred all the echoes in the quiet place, where nobody as yet had ventured upon a laugh. It was not to be supposed that Aubrey Bellingham, who was a stranger and had never seen the old Sir Ludovic, could be much subdued in his tone by "what had happened"—and Jean had already begun to feel that there was really no reason to regret such a happy release.

"I am just beginning to be able to look people in the face again," she said. "I need not tell you, Aubrey, it has been a dreadful time. My sister and I have had a great deal to do, and naturally, though it may not tell at the time, one feels it afterward. I did not leave my room yesterday at all. Grace will tell you I had one of my bad headaches. But what with seeing you to-day, and being obliged to bestir myself in the morning about some business, a piece of work quite after your own heart, Aubrey, arranging some lace."

"If it is fine, I quite understand the improvement in your health," he said. "What kind? and who is the happy possessor? I hope some of it has fallen to your share."

"Oh, a little," said Mrs. Bellingham; and Grace echoed "a little" with some dolefulness.

This division of the stores of the house into three portions had not been so successful as was hoped; and when it was again gone over, some scraps naturally fell to Lady Leslie and her daughters. It was Miss Leslie upon whom the loss chiefly fell, and there was accordingly in her tone a tinge of melancholy. She was not sorry that dear Mary and the dear girls should have it, but still it was notorious that she was generally the sufferer when any one had to suffer.

"Margaret is the most fortunate; Margaret has a piece of point de Venise. I never saw such a lovely piece. It will go to your very heart. After lunch you shall see it all, and I

"know you will think Margaret a lucky girl—too lucky! She will not appreciate it for a dozen years, and by that time she will have grown familiar with it, and it will not impress her," said Mrs. Bellingham, regretfully. "You don't think half so much of things you have had since you were a girl. But tell me, Aubrey, how is everybody? Had you heard from the Court before you left? What were they all doing? I declare it seems about a year since we came here in such a hurry. I dare say you have heard all about us, and the sad way in which we have been spending our time? I have had a great deal of flying neuralgia, and yesterday it quite settled in my head. Scotland does not suit me, I always say. It does very well for Grace, who is as strong as a pony, though she does not look it—"

"Dearest Jean!" said Miss Leslie, touched to the quick, and this time insisting upon a hearing. "I strong? Dear Aubrey knows better than to believe—"

"Oh yes, we all know, my dear, you are strong at bottom, though you have your little ailments; and with me it is just the other way. I am kept up by my spirit. Now, Aubrey, you have not given us one single piece of news. Tell us something about the Court."

"I appeal to your candor, Aunt Jean; what can I tell you about the Court when I am fresh from town?—unless you mean the other kind of a court, the royal one, or the Club. You shall hear, if you please, about the Club. You know about that trial that was so much talked of? It is to be all hushed up, I believe. *She* is to be condoned, and *he* is to have his debts paid, and they are all to live happy ever after. You should hear Mountfort on the subject. He says it will not be six months before it is all on again, and the detectives at work."

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Bellingham. "I thought Lady Arabella had really taken the last step and run off, you know, in the yacht; and that Lord Fred—"

"No names, my dear aunt, I entreat. Of course, everybody knows who is meant, but it is better not to bandy names about. Oh no; my lady would have done it, I don't doubt for a moment, but Fred is a fellow who knows very well how far the world will permit you to go, and he wouldn't hear of it; so it is all hushed up. There is something very piquant, however, going on in another quarter, where you would never suspect it. It sounds just like a romance. A couple that have always been one of the most devoted couples, and a friend who has been the most devoted friend—husband's school-fellow, you know, and saved his life in India, or something—and there they are, the three of them; everybody sees it, except the silly fellow himself. It's as good as a play to watch them; you know whom I mean. They have a place not a hundred miles from us; wife the most innocent, smiling creature—"

"Ah!" cried Miss Leslie, holding up her hands, "I can see who you mean—"

"Of course, anybody can see," said Mrs. Bellingham. "The A.'s, of course, of A. C. Do you really mean it, Aubrey? and the man? Goodness gracious! why, of course it must be!—no—not that, don't say so—Algy?—I never heard of such a complication in all my life."

"Exactly," said the new-comer; "that is what everybody says. Algy, of all men in the world, with a character to lose! But in this sort of affair you never can trust any one; and still waters run deep, you know. It is the woman that puzzles me, smiling and looking so innocent. Happily Sir Cresswell Cresswell does not want a jury, for no jury would ever go against such an innocent-looking little woman."

Effie had been taking all this mysterious talk in with the most rapt attention. She did not understand a word of it, but still a lively discussion of other people, even when you don't know who they are, and don't know what they are accused of, has a certain interest. But Sir Cresswell Cresswell's well-known name roused Lady Leslie, who had been longing to interfere before, and woke up even Ludovic, who had been eating his luncheon steadily, and thinking how the avenue could be put in order at the least expense. What did he care for their chatter? But this name woke the good man up.

"You will think me very stupid," said Lady Leslie, "but we are only plain Scotch people, you know, and very seldom go to England, and don't know about your friends. I dare say Mr. Aubrey would be so kind as to tell us something about the Court, as he said—not Bellingham Court, but the Queen's Court. Effie would like to hear about the princes and princesses, and so would Margaret. They say we are going to have one of them up here."

"Oh, surely," said Aubrey, "there is always plenty of talk on that subject. Most of them are going a frightful pace. I am not posted up in the very last scandals, for, you know, I have never been a favorite. But there is a very pretty story current about a pretty Galician or Wallachian, or some of those savage tribes. The lady, of course, was quite civilized enough to know all about the proprieties—or perhaps it would be better to say the improprieties—of our princely society, and she thought, I suppose, that an English Royalty—"

"Oh!" said Lady Leslie; "but I feel sure half these stories are nonsense, or worse than nonsense. I know you gentlemen are fond of a little gossip at your club, and I suppose you don't mean the half of what you say. Were the pictures fine this year, Mr. Bellingham? That is one thing I regret never going to London for; one sees so few pictures."

"I think everybody who has seen them will agree with me in saying the fewer the better," said Bellingham, ready for all subjects. "The dinner this year was as great bosh as usual. But there is a very good story about an R.A. who asked a great lady he happened to meet with how she liked the portrait of her husband. It was her Grace of X., or Y., or Z.—never mind who; I dare say you will all guess. She stared at him, as you may suppose. But he insisted. 'Oh yes, he had finished it a month before; and he always understood it was the Duchess herself who had suggested that pose which was so successful!' Fancy the unfortunate fellow's feelings when he saw what he had done! And I hope her Grace gave it hot and hot to the Duke."

"There, Aubrey, that will do; that is enough of your funny stories. They are not pretty stories at all, though sometimes they make one

laugh when one oughtn't," said Mrs. Bellingham. "Those clubs of yours are not at all nice places, as my sister-in-law says—and talk of women's gossip! But now and then it is like a sniff of salts, you know, or a vinaigrette, which is not nice in itself, but wakes one up. Now we must be going to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow; and I think, as you are here, Aubrey, we might as well go to Perth, and then make a little round through the Highlands. I dare say you are going somewhere shooting as soon as the moors are open. We cannot do much mountain work, because of the sad circumstances and our crape; but we might stay for a week in one place and a week in another, and so make our way to the Grange about the end of August. That would be a very good time. The very hot weather will be over, and it will be best not to try Margaret too much with the heat of an English summer. I wish you would not always interrupt me, Grace. There is never any heat in Scotland. It is rather fine now, and warmish, and quite pleasant; but as for a scorching sun, and that sort of thing— You are very quiet, Margaret. Has Ludovic been scolding you? You ought to leave that to me, Ludovic; a man has always a heavier hand. I always said, if I had been blessed with children, I never should have let their father correct them. Men mean very well, but they have a heavy hand."

"But not dearest Loodie!" cried Miss Leslie; "he always was the kindest! and dear Jean knows as well as any of us—"

"Yes, I know that a man's hand is always heavier than he thinks, whether it is a simple scolding or something more serious. Margaret looks like a little mouse, with all the spirits out of her. If she comes in like that after walks with you, Ludovic, I don't think I will trust her with you again."

"Margaret has not been very lively lately," said kind Lady Leslie. "She has lately been keeping us all in amusement, like Mrs. Bellingham. I think I will take the two girls away with me this afternoon, if you have no objections, Jean. I am going to the Manse to see Mrs. Burnside, and the walk will do Margaret good."

"Will you speak to Mrs. Burnside, please, about giving Aubrey a bed?" Mrs. Bellingham said; and Lady Leslie, who was anxious about her husband's interview with his sister, and not at all anxious to cultivate Aubrey's acquaintance, hurried them away. She had a hasty interview with Ludovic before she went out, who was very anxious she should take the business into her own hands. What was to be done? Would it be better to say nothing at all about it, but trust to the "long, long time," and the distance, and the development of the girl's mind?

"But it would be better for her to marry Rob Glen than Aubrey Bellingham, with all his nasty stories," Lady Leslie said, indignantly.

"What was the fellow talking about?" asked Ludovic. He had not paid any attention, save for one moment, at the sound of that too remarkable name; but it had not come to anything except "havers," and he had resumed his own thoughts. Lady Leslie, however, did not let her victim off so easily. She insisted that he should see Rob Glen, and warn him of the disapproval of the family; and this at last, with many sighs

and groans, the unfortunate head of the family consented to do.

"I have been watching her all the time," said the stranger, when he had been taken by the two ladies to the West Chamber, "and I approve. She is not very lively, and I dare say she will never be amusing (begging your pardons, my dear aunts, for so plain a speech); but she is very pretty, and what you call interesting; and a little money, though it is not much, is always acceptable. I have not come off hitherto, notwithstanding my merits. You put me up at too high a price, you ladies; and I have gone through a good many seasons without ever fetching that fancy price. So if you think I have any chance, really I don't mind. I will go in for Miss Margaret seriously, and I will not tell her naughty stories, but bring her up in the way she should go."

"No; you must be more careful how you talk before young ladies," said Mrs. Bellingham. "People here are not used to it. My sister-in-law is a very good little body, but quite untrained, as you would see. Yes, Aubrey, it would make me happy to see dear Margaret in your hands. I am sure you would always be kind to her. And it is a very nice little property, and could be improved; and she would make you a very nice little wife. It would just be the kind of thing to make me feel I had all I wished for, if I could provide for my little sister and for you, Aubrey, my husband's godchild, at the same time."

"Oh, we can't have you take the Nunc Dimittis view," he said, "that is out of the question; but I am quite willing, if *she* is; and if she isn't after a while, with all my opportunities, I shall be a precious fool, Aunt Jean. By-the-way, it is a little odd, if you come to think of it, marrying into a previous generation, as I should be doing if she'd have me—marrying my aunt, isn't it? I think it's within the forbidden degrees."

"Margaret your aunt, dear Aubrey? Darling Margaret is not quite eighteen; so how could that be?" said Miss Leslie; "and do you mean that *this* is what you were thinking of? Oh, I wondered what dear Jean, with her own clever head, wanted Aubrey for—Jean, who can manage everything. But how can you tell whether you will love her, dear Aubrey? You cannot always love where you wish to; and I never would give my consent, never for a moment, to a match which was not—"

"What nonsense is she talking?" said Mrs. Bellingham. She had gone to get Margaret's lace to exhibit, and this was why Grace had found the occasion to address Aubrey at such length, "a match which was not—something or other; I am sure, Aubrey, you will fall in love, as everybody does before they marry. I suppose you don't want to shut up little Margaret in a prison with you and me, Grace, and keep her money, that her husband might not get the use of it? That would be just like you old maids. But I mean Margaret to have a good husband, and live a happy life."

"Dearest Jean!" said Miss Grace, with tears. "I keep dear Margaret unmarried, or want her money! She shall have all I have when I die; and as for being an old maid—"

This was a very unkind cut indeed, and Miss Leslie was unable to resist the impulse to cry.

Her tears were not so interesting as Margaret's, for her nose became red, and her short-sighted eyes muddy. "I am sure I have not done anything to deserve this," she said, and sobbed; while Jean told her not to be so silly, and, without paying any more attention, held up the point de Venise, which had belonged to Margaret's mother, in her plump hands.

"Look at that, Aubrey! If all goes well, you may have a wife with *that* upon her wedding-dress. Dear me, I think I would almost marry myself to have it. Is it not lovely? But Margaret will not care a bit; no one does at her age. She would think a bit of common Valenciennes from a shop just as pretty, or perhaps, Lord knows, imitation would please her. I had a piece myself in my trousseau not half so good as that, nor half so much of it, but still *lace*, you know, real lace; and I let it lie about, and wore net ruffs and things. Even I! so you may fancy what Margaret will do. But if it was her mother's (and Bell swears it was), she has a right to it," Mrs. Bellingham said, with integrity beyond praise.

"It is very nice, Aunt Jean," said Aubrey, holding it to the light; "but I think you are a little too enthusiastic. If it is point de Venise, it is very late work—not the best. I should be disposed to say it was point de France—very pretty all the same, and valuable in its way. Now look at that stitch: I don't think you would find that in real old Venetian. I think that is a French stitch. But it is very nice," he added, looking at it critically, "very nice: on a dark velvet or brocade, it would look very well. As for putting it over white satin, I never should consent to such a thing. Light point de Flandres, or modern Brussels, or Malines, I shouldn't mind; but Venetian point, no. You ladies have your own ideas; but I wouldn't allow it, not if my opinion was asked."

"You see, you allow it is Venetian, after all."

"Or point de France. It is very much the same thing. Sometimes you can scarcely tell that it has travelled over the Alps. But I think I have an eye for lace. Any china?" said Aubrey, walking to a door in the panelling and opening it coolly. "Ay, I thought it was a cupboard. But here's only common stuff."

"The best tea-things!" said Miss Grace, with a little shriek, "that have always been kept there ever since I was a child."

"In that case, perhaps they are better than they appear," said Aubrey, calmly; and after a closer inspection, he decided that this was the case. They were Chelsea, "but not much." From this it will be seen that young Mr. Bellingham was a young man of extended and various information. He went up-stairs to the high room with them, and was really excited by the old clothes. The house, though he appreciated its curiousness, did not otherwise attract the young man. "If one could spend a few thousands on old oak and tapestry, it might be made very nice," he acknowledged; but there were some old cups and saucers here and there in the various rooms which pleased him. And as he accompanied the ladies up and down, and examined everything, he gave an occasional thought to Margaret, which ought to have made her proud, had she been aware of the distinction. She would do very well. She was not at all the

kind of person whom, in such circumstances, it would have been natural to see. A red-haired young woman, with high cheek-bones—was not that the recognized type of a Scotch heiress? Aubrey knew that the conventional type does not always hold; but he had thought of Miss Leslie's nose and her short sight, and he had also thought of his aunt's plumpness, and that peculiarity of tone which many Scotchwomen in England attain, with the proud consciousness of having lost all their native accent.

There are few things so disagreeably provincial as this tone, which is not Scotch, which is the very triumph and proclaimed conviction of having shaken off Scotch and acquired the finest of Southern speech. Aubrey had been afraid of all these things; but Margaret had not come up to the conventional requirements of her position. Her soft native Fife, even with its modulations, did not alarm him like Aunt Jean's high English, and her nose would never be like that of Aunt Grace. Altogether, she was an unexceptionable heiress, sweet and sorrowful, and "interesting." It was a commonplace sort of word, but yet even a superfine young man is sometimes obliged to use such ordinary mediums of expression. For a man who, previously set up at much too high a figure (to quote his own metaphor), and commanding no offers, was ready to accept a moderate fortune even under disadvantageous conditions, the thought of a nice little property, weighted only by Margaret, was very consolatory indeed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NEXT day was Sunday, the last day that Margaret was to spend at home; not like the brilliant Sunday on which old Sir Ludovic, for the last time, attended "a diet of worship" in the parish church, and was reminded of his latter end by good Dr. Burnside; but gray, and dull, and cloudy, with no light on the horizon, and the whole landscape, hill and valley and sea, all expressed in different tones of a flat lead color, the change of all others which most affects the landscape. In Fife, as has been candidly allowed, the features of the country have no splendor or native nobleness; and accordingly there is no power in them to resist this invasion of grayness. Mr. Aubrey Bellingham, though he did pretend to "go in" for the beauties of nature, intimated very plainly his discontent with the scene before him.

"Anything poorer in the way of landscape I don't know that I ever saw," he said, and sighed, when he was made to take his place in the old carriage to be driven to Fifeton, to the "English Chapel." It was six miles off; whereas the parish church, with the Norman chancel, was scarcely one. But, as Mrs. Bellingham said, if you do not hold by your church, what is to become of you?

"Only the common people go there," she said—"the farmers, and so forth. The gentry are all Episcopalian. My brother, Sir Ludovic, may go now and then for the sake of example, and because Dr. Burnside is an old family friend; but Sir Claude, and everybody of importance, you will find at our church. All the *élite* go

there. I can't think what the gentry were thinking of, to allow the Presbyterians to seize the endowments. It is quite the other way in England, where it is the common people who are dissenters, and *we* have a church which is really fit for ladies and gentlemen to go to. But things are all very queer in Scotland, Aubrey. That is one thing, I suppose, that gives the common people such very independent ways."

"Well, Aunt Jean, let us be thankful we were not born to set it right," said Aubrey, reconciled to see that his six-miles' drive was to be in company with Margaret. But she, in her deep mourning, did not afford much good diversion during the drive. The fact that it was the last day—the last day! had at length penetrated her mind; and a vague horror of what might happen, of something hanging over her which she did not understand, of leave-takings, and engagements to be entered into and promises to be made, had come over Margaret like a cloud. She had passively obeyed her sisters' orders, and followed them into the carriage, though not without an acute recollection of her last drive in that carriage by her father's side at a time when she was not passive at all, but liked her own way and had it, and was not aware how happy she was.

Margaret took all the other changes as secondary to the one great change, and did not feel them as an old man's darling, a somewhat spoiled child, accustomed to unlimited indulgence for all her fancies, might have been expected to do. But her individuality came back to her, and with it a sense of unknown troubles to be encountered; as she leaned back in her corner, saying nothing. She drew herself as far as possible away from Aubrey Bellingham, and she let her veil drop, with its heavy burden of crape, and took refuge within herself. She had to part with her home, and Bell and John, the attendants of her life, but, more alarming still and strange, she had to part with Rob Glen. Ludovic's interposition had increased tenfold the importance of everything about Rob Glen, the circumstances of which she had thought so little when the first step had been taken. How could she have thought of the young man's position, or of any consequences that might follow, at the moment when her father lay dying? Rob had been very kind; his tenderness, his caresses, had gone to her heart. There were indeed moments, after the first, when they no longer impressed her with such a sense of kindness, when she would have been glad enough to avoid the close contact, and when the touch of his arm round her gave Margaret a sense of shy shrinking, rather than of the utter confidence and soothing which she had felt at first—and when she had not liked to vex him by resistance, but had edged and shrunk away, and made herself as small as possible to avoid the embarrassing pressure.

But all this vague shyness and shrinking had changed at their last interview, when Margaret, in generous impetuosity, and terror lest he should think she considered herself raised above him by her fortune, had taken the matter into her own hands and made all the vague ties definite. What an extraordinary sensation it was to feel that she belonged to him—she, Margaret Leslie, to him, Rob Glen! She could not real-

ize or understand it, but felt, with a sense of giddiness through her whole being, that something existed which bound her to him forever. Yes, no doubt, when you came to think of it, that was what it meant. She had not been aware of it at first, but this no doubt was how it was. And Ludovic's questioning had made it all so much more real. After what her brother had said, there was no avoiding the certainty.

Between Rob Glen and herself was an invisible link, woven so closely that nothing could undo it. How changed all the world was! Once it lay free and bright and open before her, with but one restriction, and that her natural obedience to her father and loyalty to her home. Now, with a giddiness and dazzling in her eyes, she felt how different it all was. She had no longer any home, and the world was closed up to her by that figure of Rob Glen. She did not know that she objected to him, or disliked his presence, but it made everything different. And chiefly it made her giddy, so that she herself and the whole universe seemed to be going round and round—Rob Glen. She was not sure, even—but all was confusion in her mind—that she thought of him now just as she had thought of him in those old, old times, when he had sat among the potatoes and made his picture; when he had seemed so clever, such a genius, such a poet, making a common bit of paper into a landscape, in which the sun would shine and the wind blow forever.

That side of the subject was dim to her now. Rob was no longer an artist doing wonders before her eyes, but a man whose touch made her shrink, yet held her fast; one whom she was more shy of, yet more bound to, than to anybody else in the world; from whom she would like to steal a little farther off, if she could do it unnoticed, yet move a step nearer to, should he find her out. This strange jumble of feeling seemed to be brought to a climax by the thought that she was going away to-morrow. To-night—there was no avoiding the necessity—she must go again and meet him, and explain everything to him, and part with him. What might he say, or make her do and say? She could not wound his feelings by refusing, by letting him see that she shrank from him. She felt that she must yield to him, not to hurt his feelings. A mingled sense of sympathy and gratitude, and (though the word is so inadequate) politeness, made it seem terrible to Margaret to withdraw from her lover.

To betray to a person who loves you that his gaze, his touch, his close vicinity is distasteful, what a dreadful thing to do—what a wound to his feelings, and his pride, and his fondness! If he would not do it; if he would keep a little farther off, and keep his arms by his side like other people, how much more pleasant; but to be so unsympathetic, so unfeeling, as to show him that you did not like what he meant in such great kindness! this was more than Margaret could do. As she sat back in the carriage and was carried along through the gray landscape, with a whiff of Mrs. Bellingham's *mille-fleurs* pervading the atmosphere, and a sea of crape all about her, and the voices of the others flowing on, Margaret, whom they thought so impassive, was turning over this question, with flushes of strange confusion and trouble. What would he say? what

would he ask of her? what promises would she have to make, and pledges to give? To give him up was a thing that did not enter into her mind; she could not have done anything so cruel; but she looked forward to the next meeting with an alarm which was very vivid, while at the same time she was aware that it was quite inevitable that she must see him, and that in all likelihood she would do what he wanted her to do.

This pervading consciousness confused Margaret much in respect to the morning's service, and the people who came up to her and pressed her hand, and said things they meant to be kind. It was a little chapel, very like, as Mrs. Bellingham said indignantly, the chapels which the dissenters had in England; and to see all the common folk going to the big church with the steeple, to which they were called by all the discordancy of loudly clanging bells, while the carriages drew up before that little non-conforming tabernacle, was very offensive to all right-minded people.

"Things must have been dreadfully mismanaged, Aubrey, at the time when all was settled," Mrs. Bellingham said, very seriously; "for you see for yourself all the best people were there. One advantage is that it is much pleasanter sitting among a congregation that is *all* ladies and gentlemen; but surely, surely, taking the most liberal view of it, it is more suitable that *we* should have the churches, and the common people be dissenters, as they are in England? I would not prevent them—I would let them have their way; but naturally it is not *we* that should give place to them, but they to us."

"But, dearest Jean, we were all once—"

"And when you think—Grace, I wish you would let me get in a word—that we really cannot get a very good set of clergy because there is no money to give them, while the Presbyterians have got it all, though it comes out of our pockets! I have never studied history as I ought to have done, for really education was not so much attended to in our days; but I am sure the Scots gentry must have been very badly treated. For that John Knox, you know, sprang of the common people himself, and they were all he cared about, and no pains were taken, none at all, to suit the Church to the better classes. But Margaret has been more seen to-day; and we have had more condolences and sympathy from our own kind of people at this one service than we would have had at the parish church in twenty years."

These shakings of hands, however, and the words of sympathy were too much for Margaret, who was not perhaps in the best condition for being inspected and condoled with, after all the secret agitation of this long, silent drive, and who had to be sent home, finally, alone, while her sisters and their attendant stopped half-way to take luncheon with Sir Claude.

"You will send back the carriage for us, Margaret, since you don't feel equal to staying? Of course, it is a very different thing to her, who never was away from him, to what it is to us, who had not been with him for years," Mrs. Bellingham said, while Miss Leslie lingered at the carriage-door, and could not make up her mind to leave her dearest Margaret.

"I think I ought to go with her, dear child. Don't you think so, dear Aubrey? But then

Sir Claude and Lady Jane are so kind; and then it will be such a trouble sending back the carriage. Darling Margaret, are you sure, are you quite sure you don't mind going alone? for I will come with you in a minute. I don't really care to stay at all, but for Jean, who always likes a change; and dear Sir Claude is so kind; and it will be a change, you know, for dear Aubrey—the chief people in Fife!" she added, anxiously putting her nose into the carriage, "if you are quite sure, dearest Margaret, that you don't mind."

Free of the crape, and of that sense of a multitude which belongs to a closely packed carriage, Margaret went home very much more tranquilly in her corner, and cried, and was relieved as the heavy old vehicle rolled along between the well-known hedge-rows, and passed the well-known church upon its mound where her old father lay sleeping the sleep of the weary and the just. She gazed out wistfully through her tears at the path round the old apse of the church where she had walked with him so lately, and close to which he was now laid. In these days no idea of floral decorations had visited Scotch grave-yards, and the great gray stone-work of the Leslie tomb, rearing its seventeenth-century skulls and crossbones against the old twisted Norman arches, was not favorable to any loving deposit of this kind. But a rose-bush that grew by the side door had thrown a long tendrill round the gray wall, which was drooping with a single half-opened rose upon it straight across those melancholy emblems, pointing, as it seemed to Margaret, to the very spot where old Sir Ludovic lay. This went to her heart, poor child. They were taking her away, but the rose would remain and shed its leaves over the place, and make it sweet; and kind eyes would look at it, and kind people would talk of old Sir Ludovic, and be sorry for his poor little Peggy, whose life was so changed.

There is something in the pang of self-pity in a young mind which is more poignant, and yet more sweet, than any other sorrow. There is nothing so ready to bring the tears that give relief. They would talk about her, all the kind poor people; not the ladies and the gentlemen, perhaps, who went to the English chapel, and of whom Jean was so fond, but a great many people in the high town and the "laigh toun" whom Margaret knew intimately, and the family in the Manse, Dr. Burnside and his wife and Randal. Randal had been kind too. How he had run for the doctor that day, though it was of no use! and how many things he had done after, not stopping, Margaret thought, to talk to her, but always doing what was most wanted! Ah!—this thought brought her to the other end of the circle again with a spring. It was always herself, Margaret remembered, that Rob had thought of, always her first. She began to go over all the course of events as the carriage rolled on, too quickly now, to Earl's-hall. Had she forgotten, she asked herself, that time when he came to her father's aid on the church-yard path—how careful he had been of the old man—and how much trouble he had taken to please him afterward? Thinking of her own troubles, she had forgotten half that Rob had done. How kind he had been! and Sir Ludovic had liked him—he had got to be fond of him; surely he

had been fond of him! He had allowed her to be with Rob, drawing, talking, as much as she pleased. He had never said "You must give up Rob Glen." Perhaps, indeed, *that* was what her father meant. What did it matter about being what people called a gentleman? Sir Claude was all that; but except when he sent a servant to ask how Sir Ludovic was, what had he ever done, though Grace said he was so kind? The great people had all been the same. They had sent a servant; they had sent their carriages to the funeral. But Rob had held up her father when he stumbled, and had come to talk to him and amuse him, and had made a picture of him which was more to Margaret than all the National Gallery. Oh, that was what it was to be kind! The carriage heaving horribly as it turned into the rut inside the gate, stopped Margaret in the full current of these thoughts. But they were a great support to her in the prospect that lay before her, the farewell scene that she knew she would have to go through, when he would be so sorry, and she would not know what to say.

The Leslies, like so many kind people, dined earlier than usual on Sundays. They dined at five, to the great discomfort of the party who had lunched with Sir Claude, and who arrived just in time for this second meal. Mr. Aubrey Bellingham thought it was done in deference to the national desire to be uncomfortable on Sunday, and submitted with a shrug of his shoulders; but Mrs. Bellingham, having more right to express an opinion, did so frankly, and with much indignation. She said:

"I know it's Mary's way in Edinburgh; and there may be excuses where there is a young family, and servants have to be considered. Of course they are not rich, and servants insist on being considered when they know they have you in their power; but at Earl's-hall, and when *we* are here! I think it is very unnecessary. Last Sunday we were not thinking of dinner, and I am sure I cannot tell you when we had it; but just when people are recovering their spirits, and when a cheerful meal is your best restorative! It may be very good of Mary to consider her servants, but I must say she might just as well, for once in a way, have considered you and me."

"But, dearest Jean! dear Mary is the most unselfish! She does not mind any inconvenience—"

"Oh, inconvenience! don't speak to me—she *likes* it!" cried Mrs. Jean, indignant. "She is just the kind of woman that relishes a tea-dinner, and all that sort of thing; and if she can make out that she saves sixpence, what a thing that is! And Ludovic just lets her do what she likes. She is getting him into all her huggermugger ways. If a woman has not more self-respect, she ought, at least, to have some respect for her husband. But everything is made to give in to the children and the servants, in that house. I could have put up with it, not that I ever like it, in Edinburgh, for there one knows what one has to expect. But here, where Bell and John were so used to my father—and when *we* are in the house, and without even asking my opinion, and the excellent luncheon we have just had! she might have thought of Aubrey, who is not accustomed to any nonsense of consideration for ser-

vants; but I always said, though she is a good enough wife to Ludovic, that she was a woman of no perception," Mrs. Bellingham said.

After this little storm, the untimely dinner was marred by some sulkiness on Jean's part, as was perhaps natural. And though Aubrey made himself very agreeable, with the most noble and Christian forgiveness of injuries, devoting himself to little Effie, whom he regaled with histories of a less piquant description than those of his *début*, yet there was a general irritability about the simple meal which, it must be allowed, often attends that well-meant expedient for the keeping of Sunday. The company dispersed early, flocking off to their rooms, where Mrs. Bellingham, with her feet up, instructed her maid as to her packing, and once more turned over the packet of lace which had fallen to her share. Margaret, when she had seen the rest of the party go away, fled too, to escape another interview with her brother, who looked, she thought, as if meditating a renewal of his remonstrances, and, having watched her opportunity, stole softly down-stairs. Even Bell was still busy after the dinner. Her chair stood in the court outside the door, but she had not yet come out to enjoy her favorite seat. And Bell's heart was so heavy that her work went but slowly. She had no thought of anything but Miss Margaret, who to-morrow was to be taken away.

Margaret stole out like one who had learned that she was guilty. Never before had she emerged so stealthily from the shadow of the old house. She did not go the usual way, to run the risk of being seen, but crept round by the garden-wall, as she had done sometimes when returning, when Rob was with her. There was a feeble attempt at a sunset, though the sun had not shone all day, and consequently had no right to his usual pomps, but in the west there was a redness breaking through the gray, which brightened the face of the country, and changed the character of the landscape. Under the trees it fell like lamps of rich gold, escaping here and there through broken openings in the clouds, and warming the wood with gleams of color which had looked so dark and wind-scathed in the morning. Margaret went softly, threading through the colonnades of the great fir trunks, and sat down on the little mossy knoll under the silver-fir. She placed herself so that she could not be seen from the house, but yet could spy through the branches the approach of any danger from that side.

It was the first time she had been first at the place of meeting, and her heart beat as she sat and waited. She, who had shrunk from the prospect of this meeting, she became alarmed now lest he should not come, and longed for him with a kind of sick anxiety. Oh that he would come, that she might get it over! She did not know what it was to be, but instinctively felt that there must be something painful in this last meeting. The last! She would not be sorry to have met, perhaps, when she was away and had no longer any chance of seeing him. She would understand better what he meant, and what she herself meant; and there is something which subdues the pride in thus waiting for one who does not come. She did not seem so sure that it was he who cared, that it was he only who would break his heart, as she sat there alone;

and she had almost lost herself in fancies more bitter than any she had yet known—in dreamy realization of her loneliness and a sense that no one, perhaps, would care much when she went away. Who did care? Not Ludovic, who wished her to do well, but would not have suffered much had Margaret died with her father; nor his wife, who was very kind, but had so many girls of her own; nor Effie, though she would cry and think she was sorry. Nobody would care; and Jean and Grace would often find her a trouble; and nobody in the world belonged to Margaret, cared for her above everything else, was happy when she was happy, and grieved when she was sorry;—nobody—except, perhaps, him alone.

"Margaret!" A low eager voice that seemed the very essence of subdued delight, trembling with satisfaction and happiness, and he suddenly made a spring to her side from under the trees, through which he had been threading his way to the place of meeting. He threw himself on his knees by her, and seized and kissed her hands a hundred times. "You here before me! waiting for me! To think I should have lost a moment of the little time I may have you! I shall never forgive myself; but I thought it was too early for you, even now."

"Oh, I have not been waiting long," she said. "It was because we dined so early; and then they were all—tired."

"Except my Margaret. God bless my Margaret, that came out and took the trouble to wait for me! How often I have sat here and watched for the sweep of your dress at the corner of the house, for the least sign of you! And to think that *you* should have been first to-night, and waiting—"

"Why should not I wait," she said, "as well as you? And to-morrow I am going away."

"To-morrow!" he cried, in a voice of despair. "How am I to endure it? how am I to go on without you? I am afraid to think of it, my darling. Margaret! Margaret! what are you going to say to me to give me strength to get through to-morrow, and all the days after it, till we meet again?"

Now it has come! said Margaret to herself; and she felt with astonishment that the emergency seemed to give her possession of her faculties.

"I do not know," she said, steadily, "what you want me to do or say. I shall be very sorry to go away and to—part from you. But what can I do? My sisters have the right to do what they think proper with me; and I think I ought, too, to go and see my own house. I would like to take Bell or somebody, but they will not let me. And now that Ludovic is here and his family, it is natural that I should go away."

"Yes; but first say something to comfort me, Margaret. I did not suppose you could stay here forever: but tell me you love me, and will be faithful to me. Tell me when I may come after you?"

"Come after me?" she exclaimed, with a certain dismay.

"Did you not think I would come after you? Did you think I could stay in one country while you were in another—I, who have had the happiness of seeing you every day? But it is better this should end, though it is like to break my heart, for we should have lost time, and been

content just with seeing each other; and now, Margaret, my darling, we must settle something. Tell me what I may do? To wait till you are of age is a lifetime. If I come to England after you in about three months, when you are in your own house, will you receive me and tell your sisters what I am to you? Margaret! you are not frightened, darling? You did not think I would let my love go away and carry my heart with her without settling something? You could not have been so cruel!"

"I do not want to be cruel," she said; "but oh! wouldn't it do to wait—to wait a little? It is only three years; I am very near eighteen. I shall be eighteen in November; and three years go so quickly. Why do you look at me like that? I am not unkind. It is only that I think; it is only that—oh! I am sure that would be the best!"

"Three years!" he said; "you might as well bid me wait thirty years. How can I be sure you will not forget me long before three years are out? What! live without knowing anything of you—without seeing you, for three centuries—it would be all the same." Tell me to go out into St. Andrew's Bay in a storm, and be cast away on the rocks—tell me to drown myself in the Eden—as you please, Margaret! I think it is in me to do it if you bid me; but wait for three years and never see you—never know what you are thinking, never hear the sound of your voice? I had rather go and hang myself at once!" cried Rob. He was walking up and down under the shadow of the trees. He was very much excited. After coming so far, after holding her in his hand, as he thought, was he going to lose her at the last?

"I did not mean that"—she stood leaning against the fir, very much troubled—"what can I do? Oh, what am I to do?"

"You must not ask me to be content without you," he said, "for I cannot—I cannot. It is not possible for me to give you up and live without you now. If you had sent me away at the very first, perhaps— But after all that has passed, Margaret, after feeling that you were mine, to ask me to go away and give you up—now!"

"I did not say give me up; I said—"

"You said three years, darling—three lifetimes; you could not mean anything so dreadful! You would not kill me, would you? It is like taking my heart out of my breast. What good would there be in the world for me? What could I do? What would I be fit for? Margaret, Margaret! you could not have the heart to treat me so!"

"What can I do?" she said, trembling. "Ludovic has found out about you, and he asked me to give you up. I did not mean to tell you, but I cannot help it. He says they will never, never consent. And what am I to do? How can I fight with them? I said I would not give you up. I said it would break your heart."

"And so it would, my darling!" he cried, coming to her side, putting his arm round her; "and, oh, my Margaret, yours too!"

Margaret made no reply to this. She withdrew the least little step—but how could she hurt his feelings?

"That was why I said three years," she said;

"three years is not so very long. Poor Jeanie in the house, did you ever see Jeanie? She is—very fond of some one; and she has not heard of him at all or seen him, for two years. It would pass very fast. You would become a great painter—and then; but Jeanie does not know if she will ever see him again; and his name is Rob, too, like you."

"What has Jeanie to do with it?" he cried, with a look of dismay. Then he caught her arm and drew her away. "There is some one coming from the house; let us not wait here, but come down the other side of the wood. I must not be interrupted now. I have a great deal more to say to you, Margaret, my Margaret, this last night before we part."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ROB had a great deal to say, but it was chiefly repetition of what he had said before. He drew her arm within his, and they wandered down by the edge of the wood and into the fields. That last little accidental outbreak of sunshine was over, and all once more was grayness and monotonies. There was nobody about; the evening was not tempting enough to bring out walkers. In the kirktown people were out "about the doors," sitting on the kirk steps, keeping up a confused little hum of conversation, quieter than usual as suited the Sabbath night; and the people who had gardens strolled about them in domestic stillness, and commented upon the coming apples; but it was not the fashion in Stratheden to take walks on Sunday evening. The fields were very silent and still; and so absorbed were the two in their conversation that they wandered far out of the woods of Earl's-hall, and were skirting the fields about the farm before they were aware. Rob's plan was to go to London, to make what progress he could with his drawing, to study and work, and achieve success; the last went without saying. Margaret was as certain of it as that the sun would rise to-morrow. But she was not equally certain of the other part of the programme, which was that he should go to the Grange—her house where she was to live—and be produced there as her betrothed husband, and introduced to her sisters.

This prospect alarmed her more than she could say. She did not want him to come to the Grange. She did not know what to say about writing to him. The idea brought a hot blush to her face. Margaret was not quite sure that she could write a letter that she would like Rob Glen to see. He was very clever, and she did not think she could write a very pretty letter. In short, she was unpractical and unmanageable to the last degree, and Rob had some excuse for being impatient. She had no idea what could be done, except that she might perhaps come to Earl's-hall and see him there, and that three years was not so very long. He lost himself in arguments, in eloquent appeals to her; and she had nothing very eloquent to say in return. After a while she was silenced, and made very little answer at all, but walked along by his side demurely, with her thick gauze veil drooping over her face, and heard all he had to say, saying yes now and then, and

sometimes no. Her position was very simple; and though he proved to her that it was untenable by a hundred arguments, and showed her that some other plan was necessary, he did not drive Margaret out of it.

What could she do? she asked, wringing her hands. Ludovic was against them, and Jean would be much more against them. She dared not let Jean know. Even her brother himself had said that Jean must not know. And, to tell the truth, Rob himself was of the opinion that it would be better to keep this secret from Mrs. Bellingham; but yet he thought he might at least be allowed to visit at the Grange, as an old friend, if nothing more. They got through a series of by-ways into the field path, where their first meeting had been, and Rob was trying, for the hundredth time, to obtain some promise of intercourse from Margaret, when suddenly some one coming behind them laid a hand upon a shoulder of each. Rob gave a violent start and turned round, while Margaret, with a little cry, shrank back into the shadow of the hedge-row.

"My certy!" said the intruder; "this is a fine occupation, Rob, my man, for a Sabbath night!" And then she, too, gave a cry of surprise, more pretended than real, but in which there was a little genuine fright. "Eh, bless me, it's Miss Margaret, and so far from hame!" she cried.

"Mother! what are *you* doing here?" cried Rob. But as for Margaret she was relieved. She had thought nothing less for the moment than that Jean was upon her, or, at the very least, Bell coming out to seek and bring her back. Mrs. Glen was not a person of whom she stood in any fear, and she would not tell or interfere to let Jean know, for Rob's sake. So that Margaret turned round from the hedge-row with a relieved soul, and said,

"Oh, is it you, Mrs. Glen?" with a new sense of ease in her tone.

"Deed and it is just me, my bonnie young lady. I hear you are going away, Miss Margaret, and many a sore heart you will leave in the country-side. You're so near the farm, you must come in and I will make you a cup of tea in a moment. It's real gray and dull, and there's a feel in the air like rain. Come your ways to the farm, Miss Margaret, my bonnie dear; and after that Rob will take you home."

Margaret made no resistance to this proposal. She had been walking for some time, and she was tired, and even the idea of the tea was welcome. She went in after Mrs. Glen with some misgivings as to the length of her absence, but a sense of relief on that point too; for it had always been a good excuse to Bell, and even to her father, that she had accepted the civility of one of their humbler neighbors. "It pleases them; and so long as they are decent folk they will never but be awfi' keen to take care of Miss Margaret: and she knows none but decent folk," Bell had said. The cup of tea in the farm-parlor would be as good a reason for Margaret's absence as Sir Claude's luncheon-table was for her sisters'. To be sure, in former days there had been no son at Mrs. Glen's to make such visits dangerous. She went in with a sense of unexpected relief and sat down, very glad to find herself at rest in the parlor, where a little fire was burning. To be sure, Rob would walk home with her and renew his entreaties; but he could not, she

thought, continue them in his mother's presence, and the relief was great.

"Mony a time have you come in here to get your tea, Miss Margaret. I've seen Rob come ben carrying ye in his arms. I mind one time you were greeting for tiredness, a poor wee missie, and your shoe lost in the burn; that lad was aye your slave, Miss Margaret, from the time you were no bigger than the table."

"Oh, I remember," said Margaret; "I thought Bell would scold me, and I did not know how I was to go home without my shoe."

"You went home in that lad's arms, my bonnie dear, for all he stands there so blate, looking at ye as if you were an angel; he wasna aye sae blate. You went home in his arms, and gave him a good kiss, and thought no shame. But you were only six then, and now you're eighteen. Oh ay, my dear, I can tell your age to a day. You were born the same week as my youngest that died, a cauld November, and that sent your bonnie young mother to her grave. It was an awfu' draughty house, and no a place for a delicate young woman, that auld house at Earl's-hall. Fine, I mind; and Rob there he's five years older. From the time you could toddle he aye thought you the chief wonder o' the world."

"Mother, you that know so much you had better know all," said Rob. "I think her the chief wonder of the world still."

"You need not tell me that, my bonnie man; as if I could not see it in your een!" Margaret stirred uneasily while this conversation went on over her head. She had never thought of having this engagement told to anybody, of being talked about to anybody. She got up with a little gasp, feeling as if there was not air enough to breathe. If they would not surround her so, close her up, all these people; oh, if they would only let her alone! She tried to turn away to escape before Rob should have said any more—but, before she clearly understood what was passing, found herself suddenly in the arms of Mrs. Glen.

"Oh, my pretty miss! my bonnie young lady! is this all true that I hear?" Rob's mother cried, with effusive surprise and delight. "Did I ever think, when I rose out of my bed this morning, that I was to hear such wonderful news afore the night? Eh, Miss Margaret, my dear, I wish ye much joy, and I think ye'll have it, for he's a good lad; and you, ye smiling loon, I need not wish you joy, for you're just leaping out of yourself with happiness and content."

"And I think I have good reason," cried Rob, coming up in his turn and receiving her out of his mother's embrace. Oh, how horribly out of place Margaret felt between them! Never in her life had she felt the dignity of being Margaret Leslie, old Sir Ludovic's daughter, as she did at that moment. Her cheeks burned crimson; she shrank into herself, to escape from the embracing arms. What had she to do here? How had she strayed so far from home? It was all she could do not to break forth into passionate tears of disgust and repugnance. Oh, Margaret thought, if she could but get away! if she could but run home all the way and never stop! if she could but beg Jean to leave Earl's-hall instantly that very night! But she could not do any of these things. She had to stand still, with eyes cast down and crimson cheeks, hearing them

talk of her. It was to them she seemed to belong now; and how could she get away?

"Now give us your advice, mother," said Rob, "we cannot tell what to do. The Leslies are prejudiced, as may easily be supposed, especially the old ladies (oh that Jean and Grace had but heard themselves called old ladies!), and Margaret wants me to wait the three years till she comes of age. She wants me to trust to chances of seeing her and hearing of her—not even to have any regular correspondence. I would cut off my right hand to please her, but how am I to live without seeing her, mother? We had been talking and consulting, and wandering on, a little farther and a little farther, till we did not know where we were going. But now that we are here, give us your advice. Will you be for me, I wonder, or on Margaret's side?"

He had called her Margaret often before, and she was quite used to it; why did it suddenly become so offensive and insupportable now?

"You see," said Mrs. Glen, "there is a great deal to be said on both sides." Mrs. Glen was very much excited, her eyes gleaming, her heart beating. It seemed to her that she had the fate of these two young people in her hands, and might now clinch the matter and establish her son's good-fortune if Providence would but inspire her with the right thing to say. "There is this for our bonnie Miss Margaret, that she would be all her lane to bear the opposition o' thae ladies, and hard it would be for a delicate young thing no used to struggle for herself; and there's that for you, Rob, that nae doubt it would be a terrible trial to worship the ground she treads on as you do, and never to see her for three lang years. Now let me think a moment, bairns, while this dear lassie takes her cup of tea."

Margaret could not refuse the cup of tea. How could she assert herself and withdraw from them, and let them know that she was not to be taken possession of and called a dear lassie by Mrs. Glen? Her heart was in revolt; but she was far too shy, far too polite to make a visible resistance. She drew back into the room as far as she could out of the fitful gleams of the fire-light, and she shrank from Rob's arm, which was on the back of her chair; but still she took the tea and sat still, bearing with all they said and did. It was the last time; but oh, what trouble she had got into without meaning it! Suddenly it had come to be salvation and deliverance to Margaret that she was going away.

"Now, bairns," said Mrs. Glen, "listen to me. I think I have found what you want. The grand thing is that you should be faithful to each other, and mind upon each other. It's no being parted that does harm. Three years will flee away like three days, and you will be young, young, over young to be married at the end; and you would do more than that, Rob Glen, for your bonnie Margaret; weel I ken that. So here is just what you must do. You must give each other a bit writing, saying that ye'll marry at the end of three years—you to her, Rob, and her to you. And then you will be out of all doubt, and troth-plight, the one to the other, before God and man."

"Mother!" cried Rob, starting up from where he had been bending over Margaret, with a wild glow of mingled rage, terror, and hope in his eyes. The suggestion gave him a shock. He

did not know anything about the law on that point, nor whether there was more validity in such a promise than in any other love-pledge. But he was struck with sudden alarm at the idea of doing something which might afterward be brought against him, and a certain generosity and honor not extinguished in his mind made him realize Margaret's helpless condition between his mother and himself, and her ignorance and her youth; while at the same time, to secure her, to make certain of her, gave him a tug of temptation, a wild sensation of delight. "No, no," he cried, hoarsely, "I could not make her do it;" then paused, and looked at her with the eager wildness of passion in his eyes.

But Margaret was perfectly calm. No passion was woke in her—scarcely any understanding of what this meant. A bit writing? Oh yes, what would that matter, so long as she could get away?

"It is getting dark," she said; "they will not know where I am; they will be wondering. Will I do it now, whatever you want me to do, and go home?"

"Margaret, my love!" he cried, "I thought you were frightened; I thought you were shrinking from me; and here is your sweet consent more ready than even mine!"

"Oh, it is not that," she said, a little alarmed by the praise and by the demonstrations that accompanied it. "But it is getting dark, and it is late; and oh, I am so anxious to get home."

Rob wrung his hands. "She doesn't understand what we mean, mother; I can't take advantage of her. She thinks of nothing but to get home."

"You gomerel!" said his mother, between her teeth; and then she turned a smiling face upon Margaret. "Just that, my bonnie miss," she said; "a woman's heart's aye ready to save sorrow to them that's fond of her. It's time you were home, my sweet lady. Just you write it down to make him easy in his mind, and then he will take you back to Earl's-hall."

"Must I write it myself?" Margaret said; and it came across her with a wave of blushing that she did not write at all nicely—not so well as she ought. "And what am I to say? I don't know what to say." Then she gave another glance at the window, which showed the night drawing near, the darkness increasing every moment, with that noiseless, breathless pleasure which the night seems to take in getting dark when we are far from home. She got up with a sudden, hasty impulse. "Oh, if you please, Mrs. Glen, if you will be as quick as ever you can! for I must run all the way."

"That will I, my darlin' lady," said the delighted mother. It was she who had the whole doing of it, and the pride of having suggested it. Rob stood by, quite pale, his eyes blazing with excitement, his mind half paralyzed with trouble and terror, hope to have, reluctance to take, fear of something unmanly, something dishonorable, intensified by the eagerness of expectation, with which he looked for what was to come. He stood "like a stock stane," his mother said afterward, his lips parted, his eyes staring, in her way as she rushed to the desk at the other side of the room to find what was wanted. "You eedeot!" she said, as she pushed him aside, in an angry undertone. Had he not the sense even

to help in what was all for his own advantage? Margaret pulled off her black glove and took the pen in her hand. She knew she would write it very badly, very unevenly—not even in a straight line; but if she had to do it before she could run home, it was better to get it over.

"Oh, but I never wrote anything before," she said; "Mrs. Glen, what must I say?"

"Nor me. I never wrote the like of that before," cried Mrs. Glen; "and there's Rob even—too happy to help us." She had meant to use another word to describe his spasm of irresolution and apprehension, but remembered in time that he must not be contemned in Margaret's eyes. "It will be just this, my bonnie dear: 'I, Margaret Leslie, give my word before God and man, to marry Robert Glen as soon as I come of age. So help me God. Amen.'"

"Don't put that," cried Rob, making a hasty step toward her. "Don't let her put that." But then he turned away in such passion and transport of shame, satisfaction, horror, and disgust as no words could tell, and covered his face with his hands.

"Not that last," said Margaret, stumbling, in her eagerness, over the words, and glad to leave out whatever she could. "Oh, it is very badly written. I never could write well. Mrs. Glen, will that do?"

"And now your bonnie name here," said the originator of the scheme, scarcely able to restrain her triumph. And as Margaret, with a trembling hand, crossed the last t, and put a blot for a dot over the i, in her distracted signature, she received a resounding kiss upon her cheek which was as the report of a pistol to her. She gave a little cry of terror, and threw down the pen, and turned away. "Oh, good-bye!" she cried, "good-bye. I must not stay another moment. I must run all the way."

Rob did not say a word—he hurried after her, with long strides, keeping up with her as she flew along, in her fright, by the hedge-row. "Oh, they must have missed me by this time. They will be wondering where I have been," she said, breathless. Rob set his teeth in the dark. Never in his life had he been so humiliated. Though she had pledged herself to him, she was not thinking of him; and in all the experiences of his life he had never yet known this supreme mortification. He had been loved where he had wooed. The other girls whom Rob had addressed had forgotten everything for him. He half hated her, though he loved her, and felt a fierce eagerness to have her—to make her his altogether—to snatch her from the great people who looked down upon him—to make himself master of her fate. But this furious kind of love was only the excitement of the moment. At the bottom of his heart he was fond of Margaret (as he had been of other Margarets before). He could not bear the idea of losing her, of parting from her like this, in wild haste, without any of the lingering caresses of parting.

"Is this how you are going away from me, Margaret," he cried, "flying—as if you were glad to part, not sorry, when we don't know when we may meet again?"

"Oh, it is not that I am glad; it is only that they will wonder—they will not know where I have been."

"Will you ever be as breathless running to

me as you are to run away from me?" he cried. "Stop, Margaret! one moment before we come near the gate, and say good-bye."

She yielded with panting breath. That sacred kiss of parting—which, to do him justice, he gave with all the fervor that became the occasion, giving, as he felt, his very heart with it—how glad she was to escape from it, and run on!

"Oh no! I will not forget—I could not forget!" she cried.

Who was this, once more in the lovers' way? A dark figure, who, they could see, by the movement of his head, turned to look at them, but went on without taking any notice. Margaret, anxious as she was, recognized Randal Burnside, and wondered that he did not notice her, then was glad to think that he could not know her. Rob had other thoughts. "Again found out—and by the same fellow!" he said to himself, and gnashed his teeth. Randal was going over to Earl's-hall, a familiar visitor, while he, the betrothed husband of the daughter of Earl's-hall, had to skulk about the house in the dark, and take leave of his love under cover of the night. Not without bitter humiliations was this hour of his triumph.

"We must wait till he is out of sight," he said, hoarsely, holding her back. It was like holding an eager greyhound in the leash. "Oh, Margaret," he said, and despite and vexation filled his heart, "you are not thinking of me at all—and here we have to part! You were not in such a hurry when you used to cry upon my shoulder, and take a little comfort from my love!"

This, and the necessity of keeping back till Randal had passed, touched the girl's heart.

"It is not my fault that I am in such a hurry," she said. "Oh, you were kind—kind—kinder than any one. I will never forget it, Rob."

"It was not kindness," he said, "it was love."

"Yes, Rob." She put her soft cheek to his with compunction in her heart. She had been so eager to get away, and yet how kind he had been—kinder than any one! Thus there came a little comfort for him after all.

But just then, with a sudden flutter, as of a bird roused from the branches, some one came out through the gate, which Randal had not closed behind him—a figure of a woman indistinguishable against the dimness of the twilight, with a little thrill and tremor about her, which somehow made itself felt though she could not be seen.

"Is that you, Miss Margret? Bell sent me to look for you," she said, with the same thrill and quiver in her voice.

Rob Glen started violently. It was a new shock to him, and he had already met with many shocks to his nerves that night. Her name came to his lips with a cry; but he had sufficient sense of the position to stop himself. Jeanie! was it possible, in the malice of fate, that this was the Jeanie of whom Margaret had told him? He grasped her in his arms for a moment with vehemence, partly because of that sudden startling interruption, and, with one quickly breathed farewell on her cheek, turned and went away.

"Oh, Jeanie, yes, it is me. I am very, very sorry. I did not want to be so late. Have they

found out that I was away? have they been looking for me?" cried Margaret. It was not, perhaps, in the nature of things that Jeanie should be unmoved in her reply.

"You're no looking after the gentleman," she said. "He's gone and left you, feared for me; and you've given him no good-bye. You needna be feared for me, Miss Margret. Cry him back, and bid him farewell, as a lass should to her lad. I'm nae traitor. You needna be feared that Jeanie will betray ye. It's no in my heart."

"Oh, but he's gone, Jeanie," said Margaret, with a ring of relief in her voice. "And oh, I'm glad to be at home! They made me stay when I wanted to be back. Oh, how dark it is! Give me your hand, Jeanie, for I cannot see where you are among the trees."

Jeanie held out her hand in silence and reluctantly, and Margaret, groping, found it, and took hold of it.

"You are all trembling," she said.

"And if I am all trembling, it's easy enough to ken why. Standing out in the dark among the black trees, and thinking of them that's gone to their rest, and waiting for one that was not wanting me. Eh, it's no so long since you had other things in your head, Miss Margret—your old papa, that was as kind as ever father was. But nobody thinks muckle about old Sir Ludovic now."

"Oh, Jeanie! I think upon him night and day!" cried Margaret; and what with the reproach, and what with her weariness and the past excitement, she fell into sudden tears.

"Is that you, my bonnie lamb?" said another voice; and Bell came out of the gloom, where she, too, had been on the watch. "It's cold and it's dreary, and you're worn to death," she said. "Oh, Miss Margret, where have you been, my bonnie doo, wandering about the house, and greeting till your bit heart is sair? Weel, I ken your heart is sair, and mine too. What will we do without you, John and me? You are just the light of our eyes, as you were to the auld maister, auld Sir Ludovic, that was a guid maister to him and to me. Eh, to think this should be the last night, after sae many years!"

"But, Bell," said Margaret, calmed by the sense of lawful protection and the shadow of home, "it is not the last night for you?"

"Ay, my bonnie pet, it's that or little else. When you're gane, Miss Margret, a' will be gane. And my lady's a good woman; but I couldna put up with her, and she couldna put up with me. We're no fit for iither service, neither me nor John—na, no even in your house, my bonnie lamb, for I know that's what you're gaun to say. Nae new house nor new ways for John and me. We're to flit into a bit cot o' our ain, and there we'll bide till the Lord calls, and we gang east to the kirk-yard. God bless ye, my bonnie bairn. Run up the stairs; nobody kens you were away; for weel I divined," said Bell, with an earnestness that filled Margaret's soul with the sense of guilt—"weel I divined that ye would have little heart for company this sorrowful night."

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHEN Margaret stole into the long room, where the family were assembled that evening, she heard a little discussion going on about herself. Ludovic had risen up, and was standing with an uneasy look upon his face, preparing to go in search of her, while Jean was asking who had seen Margaret last. Randal Burnside had come in only a few minutes before, and was still standing with his hat in his hand; and he it was who was explaining when Margaret entered.

"I saw her with Bell as I came in," he said (which was so far true that he lingered till Bell had met her). "I fear she has been making some sad pilgrimages about the house. Has she ever left Earl's-hall before?"

"Never—not for a single day," said kind Lady Leslie; and there was a little pause of commiseration. "Poor Margaret!" they all said, in their various tones.

They were seated at one end of the long room, two lamps making a partial illumination about them, while the surrounding space lay in gloom. The books on the walls shone dimly in the ineffectual light, the dim sky glimmered darkly through the windows, opening this little in-door world to the world without. Mrs. Bellingham had got her feet up on a second chair, for there were no sofas in the long room. Sunday was a tiring day, and Lady Leslie had yawned several times, and would have liked had it been bedtime. She was a woman of very good principles, and she did not like to think of worldly affairs on Sundays; but it was very hard, at the same time, to get them out of her head. As for Miss Leslie, she had got a volume of sacred poetry, which had many beautiful pieces. She remembered to have said some of them to her dear papa on the Sunday evenings of old, between thirty and forty years ago; and though it was a long time since, she had been crying a little to herself over the thought. Effie was, perhaps, the only thoroughly awake member of the family; for it had just been intimated to her that her aunt Jean, after all, had invited her to go to the Highlands to be Margaret's companion, and her heart was beating high with pleasure. Aubrey had whispered to her his satisfaction too. "Thank Heaven you are coming," he said; "we shall not be so very funeral after all." It was while she was still full of smiles from this whisper, and while Randal stood with his hat in his hand, giving that little explanation about Margaret, that Margaret herself stole in, with a little involuntary swing of the door of the West Chamber, through which she came, which made them all start. Margaret was very pale and worn out, with dark lines under her eyes; and she came at an opportune time, when they were all sorry for her. Instead of scolding, Lady Leslie came up and kissed her.

"My dear," she said, "we all know how hard it must be for you to-night;" and when the ready tears brimmed up to the girl's heavy eyes, the good woman nearly cried too. Her heart yearned over the motherless creature thus going away from all she had ever known.

This kiss, and the little murmur of sympathy, and the kind looks they all cast upon her, had the strangest effect upon Margaret. She gave a little startled cry, and looked round upon them

with a momentary impulse of desperation. It had never occurred to her that she was deceiving any one before. But now, coming in worn with excitement and trouble of so different a kind, all at once there burst upon Margaret a sense of the wickedness, the guiltiness, the falsehood she was practising. She had never thought of it before. But now when she gave that startled look round, crying "Oh!" with a pang of compunction and wondering self-accusation, the whole enormity of it rushed on her mind. She felt that she ought to have stood up in the midst of the group in the centre of the room, even "before the gentlemen," and have owned the truth. "I am not innocent as you think me, it is not poor papa I am crying for. I was not so much as thinking of papa," was what she ought to have said. But there was only one individual present who had the least understanding of her, or even guessed what the start and the exclamation could mean. When she opened those great eyes wide in her sudden horror of what she was doing, Lady Leslie, a little frightened lest grief should be taking the wilder form of passion, unknown to the placid mind, in this poor little uneducated, undisciplined girl, did all she could to soothe her with gentle words. "We are all a little dull to-night," she said. "My dear, I am sure the best thing you can do is to go to bed."

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Bellingham, "we are all going to bed. Though it is not a day when one is supposed to do very much, yet there is no day in the week more tiring than Sunday. We always keep early hours on Sunday. By all means, Margaret, go to your room and get a good rest before to-morrow. You have been making a figure of yourself, crying, and you are not fit to be seen; though, indeed, we might all have been crying if we had not felt that it would never do to give way. When you think," said Jean, sitting back majestically, with her feet upon the second chair, "of all that has happened since we came here, and that nobody can tell whether we will ever meet under this old roof again!"

"Let us hope that Margaret will come back often; and I am sure she will always find her brother's house a home," said Lady Leslie, still holding her hand and patting her shoulder kindly. All these words came into her mind in a confusion which prevented her from realizing what they meant. She saw Jean shake her head, and demand sadly how that could be, if Ludovic were to sell the house, as he had just been saying? But even this extraordinary suggestion did not wake Margaret's preoccupied mind. They all said "Hush!" looking at her. It was supposed among them that the only one who would really suffer by the sale of Earl's-hall was Margaret, and that to hear of the idea would be more than she could bear. But in her confused condition she took no notice of anything. She did not seem to care for Earl's-hall, or for the family trouble, or for anything in the world except this strange thing which absorbed her, and which none of them knew. The lamps and the circle of faces were like a phantasmagoria before her eyes, a wreath of white sparks in the darkness, all pale, all indistinct against the dim background. Randal only became a little more real to her by dint of what seemed to her the reproachful look he gave her. She thought it was a reproachful look. He had seen her out-

of-doors, though he had not taken any notice of her. She remembered now that he had not even showed her the civility of taking off his hat.

"He has no respect for me any more," Margaret said to herself; and this thought went deep, with a pang, to her very heart.

Bell was waiting for her in her room, where already her boxes were packed, and most of her preparations made; and poor Margaret, her mind all confused with a sense that what was supposed to occupy and engross her was scarcely in her thoughts at all, gave herself up into the old woman's hard yet tender hands, as passive as a child, with all the ease that perfect confidence gives. She was not afraid of Bell, nor did she feel the guilt of keeping from her that uncomfortable secret which was no happiness to her, poor child, and which she would so gladly have pushed aside from her own mind had it been possible. "Eh, I wonder if onybody will ever take the pride in it that I have done," Bell said, taking down her young mistress's hair, and letting it fall in long, soft undulation of silky brown over her hands. She turned her head away while she brushed, that no tear might drop upon it. "Na, naebody will take the same pride in it as me: for I've been a' ye've had to bring ye up from a bairn, my bonnie, bonnie darlin': and nae ither woman can ever be that. It's like taking the heart out o' my breast to see you turn your back on Earl's-hall."

The same words had been said to her not very long before, and in a way which ought to have touched her more deeply. Margaret trembled a little with the recollection. "But I will come back again, Bell, and see you," she said, with a far more ready response. She pulled down the old woman's arms about her neck, and clung to her. "Oh, I will come back!" she cried; "Bell, there will never be anybody in the world like you."

"You maunna say that, my bonnie lamb. Many, many there are in the world better worth thinking upon than the like o' me. I am no sae selfish a creature as that; but you'll keep a corner for your old Bell, Miss Margret, ay, and auld John too. He's just speechless with greetin': but he canna yield to shed a tear—and a temper like the auld enemy himsel'. But it's no temper, it's his heart that's breaking. You'll no forget the auld man? and whiles ye'll write us a word to say you're well and happy, and getting up your heart?"

"How will I ever get up my heart," cried Margaret, "in a strange place, with nobody, nobody—not one that cares for me?"

"Whisht, whisht, my durling! You'll find plenty that will care for you—maybe ower many, my bonnie doo—for you'll be a rich lady and have a grand house, far finer than pair Earl's-ha'. And oh, Miss Margret, above a' take your great care wha you set your heart on. There's some that are fair to see and little good at the heart, and a young creature is easy deceived. You mustna go by looks, and you mustna let your heart be tangled with the first that comes. Eh, if Sir Ludovic had but lived a little longer, and gotten you a good man afore he slippit away!"

Margaret was silenced, and could not say a word. If he had known *this*, what would he have thought of it? Would he have handed his

little Peggy over to the first that came? Would he have chosen for her, and made this confusing harassing bondage into something legitimate and holy? Margaret received the thought of that possibility with a gasp, not of wishing, but of terror. It seemed to her as if she had escaped something from which there could have been no escape.

"But that's far from your thoughts as yet," said Bell, "and it's no me that will trouble your bonnie head with the like o' that before the time; and the ladies will take great care—I'm no feared but what they will take great care. They will keep poor lads away, and poor lads are aye the maist danger. Here I'm just doing what I said I wouldna do! But eh, we're silly folk; we canna see how the bairns are to be guided that gang from us: as if God would bide in Fife as well as the like o' me: as if he wasna aye there to haud my darlin' by the hand!"

Bell paused to dry her eyes, and to twist in a knot for the night the long locks of the pretty hair in which nobody again would ever take so much pride.

"And, Miss Margret," she said, "you'll no let some light-headed thing of a maid tear thae bonnie locks out o' your head with her curlings and frizzings? Sir Ludovic couldna endure them. He would aye have it like silk, shining in the sun. He never could bide to see it neglected. The ladies even, though they're no so young as they once were, did you ever see such heads? But yours is as God made it, and as bonnie as a flower. And you'll aye mind your duty, my bonnie darlin', and your prayers, and remember your Creator in the days o' your youth. And dinna think ower muckle about your dresses, nor about lads. That will come in its time. I'm just beginning again, though I said I wouldna do it! But oh, to think it's the last night, and I'll never put you to your bed again, nor gie you good advice, nor keep you from the cauld, nor take it upon me to find fault with my bonnie young lady! I canna tell what will be the use of me mair when my bonnie bird flies away."

"Oh, Bell, I will come back; I will come back!"

"Ay, you'll come back, my darlin' bairn; but if you come a hundred times, and a hundred to that, you'll never be the same, Miss Margret. The Lord bless you, my bonnie lamb—but you'll never be the same."

Whether this was a very good preparation for the long night's rest which Mrs. Bellingham thought necessary for travellers, may perhaps be doubted. But Margaret soon cried herself to sleep when Bell withdrew. She was too much exhausted with excitement to be further excited, and this gentle chapter of domestic life, the return of the faces and voices, and looks and feelings familiar to her, gave some comfort to the girl's overworn brain. They interfered between her and that strange scene in the farm-house. They formed a new event, a something which had happened since, to soften to her the trouble and commotion of that strange interruption of her life. She slept, and woke in the morning with a sense of relief which at first she could scarcely account for. What was it of comfort and amelioration that had happened to her? Was it all a dream that her father was dead, that her youthful existence was closed? No, it

was that she was going away. Margaret shuddered and trembled with wonder to think that it was possible this could be a relief to her. But yet it was so. She could not doubt it, she could not deny it to herself. When she ought to have been broken-hearted, she was glad. To go away, to escape from all that was so secret and so strange was so much a comfort to her, that she had almost forgotten that she was leaving home at the same time, going out upon a strange and unrealized existence, leaving the friends of her infancy, the house she was born in, all the familiar circumstances of her life, and her father's grave, where he had been laid so lately.

Margaret felt vaguely with her mind that all these farewells ought to have broken her heart, and she shed a few tears because Bell did so, because old John, speechless and lowering like a thunder-cloud, turned his back upon her and could not say good-bye. John had tossed her trunks on to the cart with the rest with absolute violence, as if he would have liked to break them to pieces; his face was dark with woe which wore the semblance of wrath. He turned his back upon her when she went to shake hands with him, and Margaret turned from the door of the old gray house with tears dropping like rain, but oh! for her hard heart! with an unreasonable, unfeeling sensation of relief, glad to get away from Earl's-hall and Rob Glen, and all that might follow. They thought it was perhaps the society of Effie which had "made it so much easier" for her; and Mrs. Bellingham congratulated herself on her own discrimination in having thus pleased Ludovic and consoled Margaret.

Dr. Burnside and his wife, who came to the railway to see the party off, applauded her tenderly, and bade God bless her for a brave girl who was bearing her burden as a Christian ought. Did Randal know better what it was that supported her, and made even the sight of the grave, high up upon the mound, a possible thing to bear? Did he know why it was that she went away almost eagerly, glad to be free? She gave him a wistful, inquiring look, as he stood by himself a little apart, looking at the group with serious eyes. Randal was the last to divine what her real feelings were, but how could Margaret tell this? He thought she was calmed and stilled by the consciousness of a new bond formed, and a new love that was her own, and was grieved for her, feeling all the vexations she must encounter before this love could be acknowledged, and doubting in his heart whether Rob Glen, he who could press his suit at such a moment and keep his secret, was a lover worth acknowledging. But Randal had no right to interfere. He looked at her with pity in his eyes, and thought he understood, and was very sorry, while she, looking at him wistfully, wondered, did not he know?

Thus Margaret went away from her home and her childhood, and from those bonds which she had bound upon herself without understanding them, and which still, without understanding, she was afraid of and uneasy under. Sir Ludovic and his wife left Earl's-hall at the same time to join their children in Edinburgh, and there to make other calculations of all they could, and all they could not, do. Perhaps when they were at a distance, the problem would

seem less difficult. Earl's-hall was left silent and solitary, standing up gray against the light, the old windows wide open, the chambers all empty, nobody stirring but Jeanie, who was putting all things into the order and rigidity of death. Bell, for her part, sat down-stairs in her vaulted room, with her apron thrown over her head; and John had gone out, though it was still morning, "to look at the pitawties," with a lowering brow, but eyes that saw nothing through the mist of unwilling tears.

That very night Rob Glen came back to his seat under the silver fir, and gazed at the vacant house with eager and restless eyes. He was not serene, like his mother, but unhappy and dissatisfied, and with a great doubt as to the efficacy of all that had been done. Margaret had mortified him to the heart, even in giving him her promise. He was a man who had been loved; and to be thus accepted with reluctance gave a stab to his pride which it was hard to bear. And perhaps it was this sentiment which brought him, angry and impatient and mortified, back to the neighborhood of the house from which his new love had just gone away, but where, he could not but recollect, his old love still was. Jeanie had gone about her work all day with that arrow in her heart. She had known very well what was coming, had watched it even as it came, and sadly contemplated the transference to her young mistress of all that had been so dear to herself. She had followed the course of the story almost as distinctly as if she had been present at all their interviews; seeing something, for her turret had glimpses of the wood, and guessing more, for did not Jeanie know? But yet to see them together had been for the moment more than Jeanie could bear. It had seemed an insult to her that Rob should come, leading her successor, to the very house in which she was; and her more charitable certainty that he did not know of her presence there had gone out of her mind in the sharpness of the shock. And when her work was over, Jeanie too went out, with a natural impulse of misery, to the same spot where she had seen them together. "No fear that he'll come here the night," Jeanie said to herself, bitterly; and lo! before the thought had been more than formed in her mind, Rob was by her side. She gave a cry, and sprang from him in anger; but Rob was not the man to let a girl fly from him over whom he had ancient rights of wooing. His countenance was downcast enough before. He put into it a look of contrition and melancholy patience now.

"Jeanie," he said, "will you say nothing, not a word of forgiveness, to an old friend?"

"What can the like of me say that could be pleasant?" said Jeanie; "you're far ower grand a gentleman, Maister Glen, to have anything to say to the like of me."

"You know very well that you are doing me a great deal of injustice," he said, sadly; "but I will not defend myself. If I had but known that you were here—but I did not know."

"I never heard that you took much trouble to ask," said Jeanie; "and wherefore should you? You were aye far above me. There was a time when I was silly, and thought little of that; but I ken better now."

"I don't know that I am above anybody;

there are many people that are above me," he said, with a sigh, and a look of dreary vacancy beyond her, which deeply provoked yet interested the girl in spite of herself.

"Ay," she said, "you will feel for other folk now; you will ken what it means now. But I've naething to say to you, Maister Glen, and I'm wishing ye nae harm. A's lang ended that ever was between you and me."

"Are you sure of that, Jeanie?" he said.

It was not in Rob's nature to let any one escape from him upon whom he had ever had a hold.

"Ay, I'm sure of it," she cried; "and you are but a leer and a deceiver if you dare speak to me in that voice, after what I've seen with my ain een—after the way I've seen ye with Miss Margret! Oh, she's ower good for you, ower innocent for one that hasna a true heart! Last night, no further gane, I saw you here with my bonnie young lady; and now, if I would let you, that's how you would speak to me."

"Jeanie," he said, "it's all just that you are saying; but how do you know how I was led to it? You could not see that. She came out, in her trouble, to cry here, and I was here when she came. Could I see her cry and not try to comfort her? I don't pretend to be strong, to be able to resist temptation. I should have thought of you, but you were not here; I did not know where you were. And she, poor child, was in great need of some one to rest upon, some one to console her. That was how it came about. You know me. I did not forget you; but she was there, and in want of some one to be a comfort to her. I am confessing to you like a Catholic to his priest; for all that you say there is nothing between us now."

"Oh!" she cried, "speak to me no more, Rob Glen. I canna tell what's ill and what's well, when you talk and talk, with that voice that would wile a bird from the tree."

"Why do you find such fault with my voice?" he said, coming a little nearer. "It may be as you say, Jeanie, that all is ended; but, at least, your good heart will do me justice. You were away, and here was a poor young creature in sore trouble. Say I've been foolish, say my life has gone away from me into another's hands; but do not say that I forgot my Jeanie; that I never did—that I will never do."

"Oh, dinna speak to me!" cried the girl—"dinna speak to me! I'm neither your Jeanie, nor I will not give an ear to anything you can say."

"Then I will wait till you change your mind," he said; and as she turned hastily toward the house, Rob went with her, gentle as a woman, respectful, with a sort of deprecation and melancholy softness. Perhaps she was right, he would allow, with a soft tone of sorrow. Life might be changed, the die was cast; but still it was not in Rob's nature to let any one drop. He talked to her with a tone of studious gentleness and quiet. "At least we may be friends," he said.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE party of travellers went to Perth, and from thence wandered among the hills and woods, and by the wild and lonely glens, to which that gate of the Highlands gives an entrance. It was all new to Margaret. In all her life she had seen nothing more imposing than the lion crest of Arthur's Seat, as seen across the stately breadth of the Firth, the low twin heads of the Lomonds, or, in the far distance among the mists, the long withdrawing line of the Grampians. When she saw these misty hills nearer, when she watched the clouds at play upon them, and counted the flying shadows, and shared the instantaneous brightening of the sun-glints, what wonder that Margaret felt her heart rise in her breast notwithstanding all the trouble there. She had not thought it possible that the world could be so lovely. The weather was fine, with now and then a rainy day, and the days were still long, though midsummer was past.

Mrs. Bellingham and Miss Leslie were good travellers. Given two comfortable places in a carriage, and weather at all tolerable, and they were ready to drive anywhere, and to go on from morning to night. A bag fitted with all manner of conveniences, a novel, a piece of knitting, and plenty of shawls, was all they demanded. Even when it rained they could make themselves very comfortable in the hotels, finding out who everybody was—and did not object even to walking within limits. And they knew about everything: which were the best routes, and how much the carriages ought to cost in which they preferred travelling; for it did not suit these ladies to go in coaches or other public vehicles along with the raskal multitude—and indeed, as it was still only July, the raskal multitude had as yet scarcely started on its peregrinations. As soon as they felt that their crape was safe under the shelter of large water-proofs they were happy. Mrs. Bellingham took the best seat with undaunted composure; but Miss Leslie thought it necessary to go through a good many processes of explanation or apology before she placed herself by her sister's side.

"Oh no! I cannot think of always taking that place: really, Margaret, you must have it to-day. You can see the view so much better. Dearest Jean, do make dear Margaret take my place. She sat all yesterday with her back to the horses; and I don't mind, not in the very least. I would much rather sit with my back to the horses. I never have been used to monopolize the best place."

"Hold your tongue, Grace, and get in," said Mrs. Bellingham. "I suppose you mean that I do—and I think, at my age, it is my place to have the best seat. You are only wasting our time, now that we really have a fine day. Now this is very comfortable. It is the kind of thing I always enjoy: a decent carriage, and horses that are not bad—I have seen better, but we might have a great deal worse—and two nice girls opposite, and a gentleman at hand whatever happens, and as lovely a drive before us as heart could desire. We will stop for lunch at Kenmore, Aubrey; do you know Kenmore? It is close to Taymouth, which is as beautiful a place as any you could see. It always reminds me of Windsor Castle, except that it lies low,

and Windsor is on a hill. We go by the side of Loch Tay, which is a beautiful loch, Margaret; not so picturesque as some you will see farther west, but beautiful for all that. Now, Grace, the girls have settled themselves, and Aubrey is on the box. Are we to wait for you all day? You always keep us waiting when every one is ready to start."

"It is only because I wanted some one to have this seat," said Miss Grace, anxiously. "I have been this way before, and the dear girls have not; or Aubrey, perhaps, dear Aubrey would rather be here than on the box? It would be much more amusing for you all, dear Jean, than to have me. Oh!" said the trembling lady, as her more energetic sister dragged her in with a grip of her arm, and the door was closed upon her. She kept asking Margaret and Effie all the day to change places with her, and kept the party in a fidget; "for, you see, I have been this way before," she said. It was a bright day, and Loch Tay lay before them, a sheet of light, between pale and golden, its fringe of trees wet with past rain, and big Ben Lawers rising huge into the blue air.

Margaret felt that she had to make an effort to retain the sadness that she had kept round her like a mantle. How could she laugh? how could she let them talk, and chime in with irrepressible reply and remark, when only such a little while ago—not yet a month ago?—she said to herself. But when things had come so far as this, it was not to be supposed that the little veil of natural sentiment could keep her eyes always drooping. Her face began to glow again, to change from white to red, and back into that delicate paleness which was habitual to her. The clouds and the mists cleared away from her brown eyes. The scent of the young birches, the plash of the water on the shore, the soft shower of rain-drops now and then shaken out over their heads by some mischievous breeze as they passed; the atmosphere so heavenly clear, the sun so gay and friendly, beguiled her out of her trouble.

In grief, as in sickness, there is a moment when the burden is sensibly lightened, the bonds relax for the first time. This moment came to Margaret now. She was terrified to feel how light her heart was, and what an involuntary glow of exhilaration had come over her. Nothing had happened to make her glad. She was only rising again, in spite of herself, into the beauty of the common day, into the light and brightness of her youth. And indeed, but for the sense that she ought not to be happy, Margaret might well have felt the well-being of the moment enough for her. The fresh air, and the pleasant progress, and all the beautiful sights around her, were brightened by Effie's bright countenance, full of smiles and delight, and by the other companion on the box, who leaned over them to shower down a flood of comments upon everything—comments which were generally amusing enough, and often witty to Margaret's simple ears. And even the self-contented comfort of Jean, sitting well back in her corner, with her eau-de-cologne, her purse, her little paper-knife, her novel lest the drive should get dull, and Miss Grace's anxious regret to have the best side, and desire that some one would "change seats with her," were full of fun, full of amusement to the inexperienced girl. Nature betray-

ed her into laughter now and then, into smiles between times.

It was only a month yet, not quite a month, since old Sir Ludovic died; but was it Margaret's fault that she was only eighteen? These four weeks had lasted the length of generations. Now they were creeping into their natural length again, into mornings and evenings, soft and swift as the passage of the clouds. And the country was so fresh and sweet, and all the world so amusing in its varied humors. Her heart came back again into renewed life, with a little thrill and tremor of unconscious yet half-guilty pleasure. She could not be churlish enough to close herself up against all the seductions of nature and gentle persuasions of her youth.

Killin was one of the places where the party had arranged to stay, or, rather, where Mrs. Bellingham had arranged to stay. To have one person with a decided will and taste, and all the rest obedient in natural subjection or good-humored ease, is the grand necessity for such an expedition. Mrs. Bellingham fulfilled all these requirements. She knew what she herself liked, and was very well disposed to make other people accept that, as the standard of beauty. And luckily Jean had been on Loch Tay before, and had arbitrarily decided, like a despot of intelligence, that on Loch Tay Killin was the place to stay. She sat up in her carriage with a pleased importance as they drove in through the homely cottages, thatched, and tiled, and mossy, through the genial odor of peat in the blue air, past the swift flowing of the brown golden stream which winds its way into the loch round that island where the dead Campbells have their mausoleum as lordly as Taymouth, and how much more safe and sweet. Jean sat up in her place with a pleased relaxation of her countenance as the carriage drove round to the inn-door where Steward, her maid, who had gone by the coach with all the boxes of the party, stood in attendance behind the smiling landlord, but heading the homely waiters and chamber-maids. Steward knew her place. To be mistress of a Highland inn would not at all have displeased her; but she knew very well that she was of a different and higher order of being from those smiling Highland maids with their doubtful English, and the anxious waiter who had so many parties to look after, and lost his wits now and then when the coach was crowded. A party taking so many rooms, and not illiberal in their way, though Mrs. Bellingham looked sharply after the bills, gave importance to everybody connected with them.

"You got my letter, Mr. MacGillivray?" said Mrs. Bellingham.

"Ay, my leddy; oh, ay, my leddy; and I hope ye'll find everything to your satisfaction," said the landlord, opening the door with anxious obsequiousness, as if Jean had been the Queen herself, Miss Leslie could not but remark. It was a pleasant moment. The sun was declining westward; the roar of the waterfall above the bridge came fitfully upon the air; the rush of the nearer stream sounded clear and close at hand; the cottage children ran in picturesque little russet groups to gaze at the new-comers. On the other hand, Ben Lawers, clumsy but grand, heaved upward against the sky and cut its arch in two. The trees filled in all the crev-

ices about, and in the distance Glen Dochart glimmered far away, opening up between the hills a golden path into the west.

"Make haste, children," said Mrs. Bellingham, "for we will have to dine at the *table-d'hôte*; and that I know by experience waits for nobody, and a very funny business it is. But it's a great pity we're a month too early, and you'll get no grouse."

"That is a mistake indeed," said Aubrey; "but, after all, we are only a fortnight too early, and the time may come when we shall have better luck."

"And oh, darling Margaret," said Miss Leslie, "I have had such a beautiful view! I am so sorry, I cannot tell you how sorry, I am that neither you nor dear Effie would take my seat!"

It had been a most successful day, with no clang or bustle of railways, but only the horses' measured trot; the roll of the wheels; the flash of the sunshiny loch; the honest Highland sunshine, sweet as heavenly light can be, but never scorching, only kindly warming, cheering, smiling, upon the wayfarer. And now it was very pleasant to see the friendly people at their doors: the Highland maids, happy to please you, with their kind voices and looks of friendly interest; the waiter, bothered to death, poor man, but anxious, too, that you should eat and show an appetite. Nowhere else is there such homely interest in the chance guest. Perhaps the bill is a trifle high: is it a trifle high? Not any higher than in England, though perhaps just a little more than in the big, inhuman Swiss caravansary where all the Cockney world is crowding. There are caravansaries in the Highlands too, but not at Killin. There, still, the maids smile kindly, and cannot bide that you should not be happy; and the waiter (though drawn three ways at the same moment) is troubled if you do not "enjoy your dinner." And the peat smoke rises in aromatic wreaths into the clear blue air, and the river flows golden in the sunshine, but above the bridge tumbles in foaming cataracts; and broad and large, with a homely magnificence, the loch spreads out its waters under the sun or moon.

After the meal, grandly entitled a *table-d'hôte*, to which our party sat down in friendly conjunction with a stranger pair, whom Mrs. Bellingham was very condescending to, and whom it was odd not to know intimately, as they did to each other all the honors of the family dinner, Jean retired to the most comfortable room, where Steward brought her writing things, and her books and knitting. "I will put up my feet a little," she said, "but I advise the rest of you to go out for a walk. You should never lose a fine evening in the Highlands, Aubrey, for you never know what to-morrow may be. I know the place as well as I know my Bible. Go up to the bridge and look at the water-fall, for it is considered very fine; and there is a man, where the boats lie, who sells Scotch pearls; you can tell him to bring them up to show us after you come in again. But go out and take a walk first, and get the good of the fine evening. I will just put up my feet."

"And, dearest Jean, as Aubrey is a kind of cousin—or perhaps it is a kind of nephew—to darling Margaret, don't you think I may stay with you? for it would be very selfish of me,

dear Effie, and dear Margaret, to leave dearest Aunt Jean alone."

The younger people strayed out without waiting for the conclusion of the controversy which was thus opened between the ladies; for Mrs. Bellingham was quite able to dispense with her sister's society, though kind Miss Grace, with many a whisper behind her back, declared that she did not at all mind, but that it would never do to leave dear Jean alone. They went out discussing their own curious relationships with a great deal of natural amusement; for there was no doubt that Effie at seventeen and a half was the unquestionable niece of Margaret, who had not yet arrived at her eighteenth birthday. "And as Miss Leslie is my aunt Grace, it is unquestionable that Miss Margaret Leslie must be my aunt Margaret, most venerable of titles," said Aubrey, taking off his hat and making her a reverential bow. He protested that no Christian name could be added to the title of aunt which could produce so profound an impression of age and awe. Aunt Grace might sound skittish and youthful, and Aunt Jean be no more than matronly; but nothing less than a white-haired grandmother could do justice (they all allowed) to the name of Aunt Margaret. Effie, who was a great novel-reader, reckoned upon her fingers how many there were to be found in books.

Thus discussing, they went lightly along through the soft Highland evening all scented with the peat. The sky was still blue and clear, but in the village street it was almost dark, glimmers of the never-extinguished fires shining cheerfully from the cottage-windows, and the few passengers about looking at each other with puckered eyelids, "as an old tailor looks at the eye of his needle," according to Dante. Some one contemplating them thus, with contracted pupils and projected head, attracted the notice of the girls as they went along, in a little pause after their laughter—some one with a fishing-basket over his shoulder—and came to a sudden pause before them.

"Randal Burnside!" Margaret cried, with a little start. And Randal made a very elaborate explanation as to how he had been under an old engagement to come here to fish, and how much surprised he was to see them arriving whom he had parted from only about ten days before.

"I could not believe my eyes," he said.

Why should not he believe his eyes? Mrs. Bellingham, when told of this explanation, declared indignantly that she had herself told him of her intention to stay a few days at Killin.

"What should he be surprised at?" she asked; but this was a question to which nobody could reply.

He turned with them, as was natural, and they all continued their walk together. There were no lamps nor other worldly vulgarities in Killin; there was no railway even, in those days, invading the silence of the hills—nothing but the cottages, low, homely places, in pleasant tones of gray, and red, and brown, with soft blue penons of the aromatic peat-reek floating over them, and clouds of white convolvulus threaded up and down their homely walls—and the big shadows of the hills forming the background, or, when you reached higher ground, the silver brightness of the loch. And how quiet it was! the distant

roar of the wild water only heightening, as with a great abstract voice of nature, taking no note of humanity, the tranquillity and softened dimness of the village. The little group took in the stranger and increased itself, then unconsciously sundered and formed into two and two.

Was it not the merest accident that the two in advance were merry Effie and the gay Englishman, and the two behind Randal and Margaret? Nothing could have been more natural. But Margaret's hesitating laughter was quenched henceforward. She was half ashamed of it, as not befitting her orphanhood and her black dress: and then she could not but think of the other evening, not so very long ago, when Randal's appearance had startled her before: the time when he had not taken any notice, not even taken off his hat. Margaret had never got over the humiliation of that greeting withheld. He had seen her, for she had heard him say so: but then and there, she felt, Randal must have lost his respect for her—Randal, who had known her all her life. Even in the excitement of the moment this had given Margaret a wound; and she had not got over it, though that evening had so many recollections that were painful to her. Two or three times now in the soft gloom, as they walked along side by side, she raised her head and gave him a furtive, timid glance, with the words on her lips, "Why did you take no notice that night?" But though her mind was full of it, she had not the courage to ask the question. Effie and Aubrey went on before, their voices sounding softly through the night; but Randal did not say very much, and Margaret nothing at all. The spell of the momentary gayety was broken. A little moisture even stole into her eyes under cover of the night; and yet she was not unhappy, if only she could have had the courage to ask why it was that he "took no notice." They went as far as the bridge and stood there, looking at the torrent as it foamed down, leaping and dashing in white clouds over the rocks.

Margaret had never seen such a scene; even the brawling cataracts of the Tummel and Garry, which had been her first experience of the kind, were not like this. In the midst of the wild commotion a knot of stately firs held themselves aloof, intrenched in a citadel of rock amidst all the rage of the torrents, the wild water raging on every side, but the tree-island, coldly proud, scarcely owning, by a quiver of its leaflets, the influence of so much passion roused. Randal said something to her as he stood by her, but she could not hear a syllable. She looked up at him and shook her head, and he smiled. Somehow he did not look (though it was so dark that she could scarcely see) as if he had lost his respect for her, after all.

"What a row," said Aubrey, as they came away, "for such a cupful of water! If it had been Niagara, there might have been some excuse."

"That is just like the Highlands," said Randal, with that partial offence which always moves a Scotsman when it is suggested by any impertinent stranger that his country is not the equal in every respect of every other country under the sun. "It is not Niagara, and Ben Lawers is not Mont Blanc; but they impose upon us all the same."

"Hush!" said Margaret; "don't talk; one is enough." What she said was not very intelligible, but, indeed, the one voice was enough in the air. It seemed to her to declaim some great poem, some wild chant, like a sublime Ossian. The others went chattering on before, delighted with themselves and their jokes. And when the rush of the wild stream had sunk into a murmur, Margaret herself began again to wonder. "Why did he take no notice *that* night?"

Next day Randal joined them quite early. It was not a good day for fishing, he said. It was too bright. Besides, if they were only going to stay a day or two, he could make up for his idleness afterward. He had got a boat ready, and was bent on taking the ladies to Finlarig, and afterward upon the loch.

"Of course, we are going to Finlarig, Randal," said Mrs. Bellingham. "Do you think I have never been here before? Good-morning, Duncan Macgregor. Have you any of your pearls to-day? Oh yes! I should like to look at them. The little ones are beautiful, but the big ones are too milky. I like the small size best. You can come up and see us after dinner to-night, and bring them with you. Duncan and I are old friends. Many a pearl I have got from him, and had them set afterward at Sanderson's, in Princes Street. I invented the setting myself, and it was very much admired—just a gold thread twisted round them. Margaret, you don't wear any rings. I must have one made for you. Duncan Macgregor had much better come with us, Randal. I have no confidence in gentlemen rowers. You will go off with the girls as soon as we get to Finlarig, and then where shall we be?"

"You will have your devoted nephew, Aunt Jean. My aunts are the aim and object of my life. I never think of anything else, sleeping or waking. How can you talk of being left alone so long as you have *me*?"

"I prefer Duncan Macgregor," said Aunt Jean; "and as for your aunts, as you call them, you have only one. And I don't want to see you pushed out of your place by that lad, Randal Burnsides," she added, in a whisper. "Just you keep your eyes upon him, Aubrey. I can't think what business he has here."

Mrs. Bellingham's prophecy was so far fulfilled that the young men and the girls did somehow, as is their use and wont, manage to separate themselves from their elder companions, one of whom, at least, had every desire to further this separation. It was Randal who was the cicerone of the party, and who led them through the winding path to that secluded, sheltered palace of peace where the dead Campbells rest. They were not thinking much about the Campbells. Who, indeed, thinks of the silent occupants, be they Pharaohs, be they Highland caterans, of those still dwellings of the dead? The Campbells lie in lordly guardianship of their loch and their trees, with their clan within call, and their castle scarcely out of hearing, and all kinds of Highland bravery—honeysuckles and wild roses in the summer, barbaries and rowans in the autumn, flanking upon the half-ruined wall that surrounds their tomb.

The young people strayed that way—two of them full of talk and laughter, two of them quiet enough. Why it was that Effie and Aubrey fell

together it would be difficult (yet not very difficult) to say; but the reason why Margaret stayed her steps for those of Randal was easy enough. She wanted, constantly wanted, to ask him why he took no notice *that* night. For this reason she lingered while the others went on, looking at him now and then with a shy, eager look, which at once puzzled the young man, and filled his heart with a dangerous interest. She wanted to ask him something—what was it she wanted to ask him? Randal was on his guard, he felt. He had been warned effectually enough. Margaret was not for him. Even if he had wanted her (which he did not, he said to himself with a little indignation), was not he forestalled? Had not her heart been caught in its first flight? He might be sorry, but that did not matter much: the deed was done. And he was fully warned, completely forestalled, even if he had wished for anything else. But what was it she wanted to say? Probably, in the innocence of her heart, something about *that* fellow, for whom, poor thing, she must fancy—she who knew nobody, because she loved him—that every one cared.

They came at last to a little sheltered glade close to the little river, with its golden brown water. There was a beautiful barberry growing in a corner, which Margaret had caught sight of. She wanted a branch of it to put in her hat, she said—until she remembered that her hat was covered with crape. But Randal was cutting the scarlet grapes before that evident incongruity had occurred to her. She sat alone upon a bit of the broken wall close by, among ferns and ivy, and watched him.

"Oh," she said, "I am so sorry I have given you the trouble. I forgot that it was crape I was wearing. It is very strange that one should ever be able to forget."

"But you are—by moments."

"Yes; it shows how little one knows. I thought I would die."

"But that could not be," said Randal, kindly.

"The world would come to an end very quickly if grief killed; but it does not, even the most terrible."

"And you will think mine was not like that," said Margaret. "But I do not forget him! oh, I do not forget him! only—I do not know how it is—my mind will not keep to one thing. I suppose," she said, with a deep sigh, "it is because I have not very much mind at all."

"Nay, you accuse yourself unjustly," he said, with a half smile; "after the shock of a great event, a great trouble, there comes a time of quiet—"

"Oh!" she said, finding herself, by no doing of hers, brought to the point she desired, and turning to him with a sudden start, "Randal, I would like to tell you something. I thought I should have told them all *that* night when I came in, but I had not the courage."

"What is it?" Randal threw a twig of his barberries into the stream and watched it carried along, tossing on the swift current. She was going to speak to him of her love, the poor child; and his heart revolted against such a confidence. He could not look at her. Girls receive the confidences of men with interest, but it is very seldom indeed that a young man plays the same part to a girl.

"When I came in *that* night you all thought my heart was breaking because I was going away, and I did not dare to say otherwise. But oh, Randal! it was not *that*!"

"I understand." He threw in another branch of the barberries and watched it intently, turning his head away from her. "It was another kind of parting that made you cry; you were thinking of—"

"Oh, I was thinking—how glad, how glad I would be just to get away, only to get away!"

"Margaret!" he turned round and looked at her quickly now. She was not embarrassed nor blushing, as if the words could bear some happier meaning, but quite pale and serious, looking at the water as he had been doing. Though he had known her all her life, he had of late given up calling her by her Christian name. It was the surprise that forced it from his lips.

"It sounds like wickedness," she said, fervently. "I can see that, but I do not mean any ill. I could not help it; things had been so strange. How could I help trembling and crying? All had gone wrong, some way. And oh, I was glad, so glad to get away, to be free! But if I had said so you would all have thought me—I don't know what you would have thought me. But it came into my head that perhaps you guessed my true meaning, and thought it was a lie I was telling, and had no more respect for me."

"Respect for you! That is not the word I would have used, Margaret. I have always—liked you—taken an interest in you ever since you were a little baby. How could I lose what you call respect?"

"But you looked like it, Randal. Why did you pass me in the gloaming and never say a word, nor even nod your head, or take off your hat?"

"Margaret!" he cried, in great confusion, "I—I thought you did not want to be recognized. I—thought you would like to think I had not seen you—I thought—"

"How could I do that?" said Margaret, seriously; "for that could not have been true. I have wondered ever since if you thought me—a—bad girl, Randal? Oh! I think I have no heart! I can laugh, though papa has only been gone a month. I—almost—forget sometimes that I am so unhappy; but I am not a bad girl, Randal. You might always take off your hat to me. You need not think shame to speak to me—"

"Margaret, for Heaven's sake! who could have imagined you would take it so? I thought you had some one with you whom you cared for more than any one else, and that you would rather I took no notice. I did not think I had any right to interfere between him and you."

"No," said Margaret, with a deep sigh, "I suppose nobody could do that;" and after a pause she resumed, half smiling—"But you should not look as if you thought shame of your friends, Randal; you should take off your hat, even when a girl is not very wise. I thought you had no respect for me after that night."

Margaret pronounced the word *wise* as if it had been written *wice*, which the reader who is Scotch will be aware is a word with a quite distinct meaning of its own; a girl who is not *wise* means a girl who is wildly silly, without any

sense—perhaps with not all her wits about her. What would Sir Ludovic have thought had he heard a speech so outrageously Scotch from his little Peggy? How he would have smiled, how he would have scolded! Randal remembered the old man's amused reproofs; but his heart was too much troubled to permit him to smile. And the inference that lay in Margaret's words was more than his intelligence could fathom. He was thrown into the wildest commotion of curiosity, anxiety, and wonder. Was it possible that there was no love, after all, between her and Rob Glen? or what did her joy in escaping, her sigh at the thought that no one could interfere, mean? He answered her at last in a strain quite confused and wide of the purpose, like a man in a dream.

"If I should ever be able to do anything for you, to be of any use to you, Margaret, will you send for me? will you let me know? Whatever it may be, and wherever I may be," he cried, in his confusion, "if you ever tell me you want me, I will come to you if I am at the end of the world!"

She looked up at him with faint surprise, yet gratitude. "Yes, Randal," she said; "now I know that you have not lost your respect for me. But how should I ever want anything?" she added, with a smile; "there is Jean always to take care of me, you know."

CHAPTER XXXI.

MRS. BELLINGHAM did not stay long at Killin. How it came about could never be discovered; but wherever the party went, in whatsoever admirable order they set out, it was discovered on their return that Aubrey was somehow at the side, not of Margaret, but of Effie Leslie. His aunt took him severely to task when this dereliction from all the rules of duty had been made evident by the experience of several successive days. Aubrey did not deny or defy his aunt's lawful authority. "It is all that fellow," he said, "continually poking in before me, wherever we go, with his Margaret, Margaret! as if she belonged to him. I hate these men who have known a nice girl from the time she was that high. They are always in the way."

"And do you really allow yourself to be put off your plans so easily—you, Aubrey, a man of the world? If I were you, I would soon let Mr. Randal Burnside find his proper place. Let him take care of Effie. Effie would do for him very well. She is the second daughter, and they are not very rich, and her sister has made but a poorish sort of marriage. Effie might do worse than put up with Randal Burnside. It would be doing them all a good turn if you would be firm, Aubrey, and insist on doing what we all wish."

"Surely," said Aubrey, "nothing can be more easy. I hope I know as well as anybody how to keep a presuming fellow in his right place." But, comforting as this assurance was, the very same thing happened the next day, and Mrs. Bellingham was not only angry, but disturbed by it. She called Aubrey into her room at quite a late hour, when she was sitting in all the sanctity of her dressing-gown. Perhaps

their tempers were a little disturbed by the fact that they were both chilly—he with his walk by the side of the loch to finish a cigar, she in the before-mentioned dressing-gown, which, being but muslin, was a little too light for the latitude of Killin.

"The same thing over again, Aubrey," she said; "always that little flirt of an Effie. I declare I never see you pay the slightest attention to Margaret; and when you know how much all your friends wish you to settle—"

"All right, Aunt Jean," said Aubrey, with a tone of injury. "It is all those girls that will derange the most careful calculations. They are both of a height, they are both all black; it is only when you hear their voices that you can tell which is which: and if one will go off in one direction while you have settled all your plans for the other—"

"Ah, Aubrey, I am afraid it is just the old story," said Mrs. Bellingham, shaking her head; "you like the wrong one the best."

"That is a trifle," said the dutiful nephew; "we were not born to follow our inclinations. The wrong always suits the best, that goes without saying; but I hope I am not quite a fool, and I was not born yesterday. Your Effie may be all very well to chatter with, but what should I do with her? I should not choose to starve for her sake, nor I don't suppose she would for mine. It is Margaret for my money; or perhaps the other way would be more like the fact: it is her money for me. But what can a fellow do with the best intentions, if the other three make a point of thwarting him? The only thing to be done is this: send the little one home, and turn that other man about his business: when there are only two of us, we are bound to be civil to each other," Aubrey said, with fine ease, turning over the bottles on his aunt's toilet-table. Mrs. Bellingham was struck by the thorough-going honesty of this suggestion.

"Well, that sounds very fair, Aubrey," she said. "I would not expect you to say more. And, to be sure, when a girl makes a dead set at you, it is very difficult for a young man to keep quite clear. We must not do anything violent, you know, and it makes me much more comfortable to hear you speak so sensibly. Randal Burnside, of course, will be left behind here, and Effie can go home from Stirling or Glasgow. And as we leave in two days, there will be no great harm done. But after that, my dear boy, I do hope you will not lose your time."

"Trust me for that!" he said. "Do you really use such an antediluvian cosmetic as Kalydor, Aunt Jean—you whom I always believed to be in advance of the age? *Crème de thé* is a great deal better. Without it I could never have made up my mind to face the rude winds of the North. Have a little of mine and try; I am sure you will never use the other again."

"Oh, thank you, Aubrey; but I am very well satisfied with my own," said Mrs. Bellingham, who did not choose that anything belonging to her should be called antediluvian. "It is more refreshing than anything when one has been a long time in the air. Then that is settled, and I shall not have to speak of it again, I hope. But if I were you—a university man and a club man—I would show that I was more than a match for Randal Burnside, who never was at

anything but a Scotch college, and can't belong to anything better than one of those places in Princes Street. I would not allow myself to be put out of my way by a provincial. I should be ashamed to give in like that, if I was such a young man as you."

Aubrey shrugged his shoulders, and offered no further defence; and the remaining two days were passed happily enough, Margaret and Randal remaining upon terms of confidential intimacy, without any word on either side to make the situation more plain. *She* felt that she had committed her secret to his trust, and was partially supported in consequence in the bearing of it—and encouraged to forget it, which she did accordingly with a secret ease and relief beyond all words—while he, too, felt that something had been confided to him, something far more serious than she seemed to be aware of; and yet did not know what it was. Thus, while she was perfectly at her ease with him, Randal was not so happy. He could not ask her a question, could not even let her see that he remembered the half-involuntary confidence, yet felt the most eager desire to know fully what it was which had been confided to him. How could he help her, how could he be of use to her if he did not know? This pleasant fiction of being "of use," and the eager prayer he had made to her to call him whenever and wherever she wanted him, was it not the natural protest of honest affection against the premature bond which had forestalled itself, which had no right to have come in the way of the real hero? He did not himself know that this was the origin of his anxiety about Margaret, his strong wish "to be of use." How could he be of use? how interfere between the girl and her lover—he whose only possible standing-ground by Margaret's side would be that of a lover too?

But Randal, though he was very clear-sighted in general, had but a confused vision of things relating to himself, and deluded himself with the idea that he might "be of use," might help her, and do a great deal for her—if he only knew! And he did know that some kind of tie existed between her and Rob Glen, but no more. Whether it was wholly clandestine, as it appeared, whether "the fellow" had secured her to himself under any vow of secrecy, whether anybody belonging to her knew, or suspected, Randal could not tell. And the frankness with which she had admitted herself to some sort of participation in the mystery made it more confusing and bewildering still. He could not put any question to her on the subject, but shrank from the very thought of such an interrogation with a mixture of pain and shame, feeling his own delicacy wounded. That Margaret should have a secret at all was intolerable. He could not bear to be her confidant, to hear her acknowledge anything that marred the simple ideal of her maidenhood; and yet how was he "to be of use," if he did not know?

She, for her part, was greatly relieved by the little snatch of conversation which had conveyed so much. He had not lost his respect for her. He did not "think shame" of her. This was very comforting to Margaret. She had made it all quite clear, she thought, how things had gone wrong, and how it was a relief more than a sorrow to leave her home; and now she could be

quite at her ease with Randal, who *knew*. Having thus spoken of it, too, made the burden of it very much lighter. The thing itself was over for the present; and it must be a long time, a very long time, before she would be forced to return to that matter. Perhaps, some time or other, she might be forced to return to it; but not for such a long, long time.

Thus all seemed easy for the moment, and Margaret thrust her foolishness behind her, and managed to forget. They had two more cheerful days. They took long walks into Glen Dochart, and went out on the loch in the evenings; and Effie sang, who had a pretty voice and had been taught; whereas Margaret had a pretty voice, but had not been taught, and was fired with great ambition. And Aubrey took upon him to make researches into the crockery-ware in the cottages, by way of looking for old china, of which he assured them, he often "picked up" interesting "bits," at next to no price at all, in the neighborhood of Bellingham Court. It did not answer, however, in Perthshire, and Randal and the two girls being Scotch, had to interfere to rescue him from Janet Campbell, at the post-office, who thought nothing less than that the man was mad, and intended to break her "pigs," which is the genuine name of crockery in Scotland.

All these things amused them mightily, and filled up the days, which were not invariably fine, but checkered by showers and even storms—which latter amused the party as much as anything, since there was a perpetual necessity for consultations of all kinds, and for pilgrimages in twos and threes to the window, and to the door, to see if it was going to be fine. During all this time Mrs. Bellingham persistently labored to control fate, and to pair her young people according to her previous determination. That Randal and Effie should have taken to each other would have been a perfectly reasonable and suitable arrangement, and Jean felt that she could meet her brother and his wife with a pleasant sense of triumph, had she been the means under Providence of arranging so very suitable a match. He was a very pleasant young man, well educated, sufficiently well-born, with a little money and a good profession—what could a girl's parents ask for more? But it is inconceivable how blind such creatures are, how little disposed to see what is best for them. With all the pains that she took to prevent it, the wrong two were always finding themselves in each other's way.

And perhaps it helped this result that Miss Leslie, all unconsciously, and in the finest spirit of self-sacrifice, did everything she could to thwart her sister, and to throw the wrong person in the way. It went so to her heart to see Margaret smiling, as she talked to Randal, that she walked all the way home from the bridge by herself, though it was getting dark, and she was nervous to leave the two to themselves. "They will like their own company better than mine," Miss Leslie said to herself. And when Jean asked sharply what had become of Aubrey, Grace quaked, but did not reply that she had seen him taking Effie down the river in the gleam of compunctious brightness, after the afternoon's rain.

"Dear Jean," she said, "you must not be

anxious. I am sure he will be back directly, almost directly."

"Anxious!" cried Mrs. Bellingham. It was hard upon so sensible a woman to have to deal with persons so entirely unreasonable. Then Randal let fall various intimations that he had a great fancy for seeing Loch Katrine again.

"The fishing here is not so good as I expected," he said. "I think I shall go farther west."

"I would not do that if I were you," Mrs. Bellingham said, with a very serious face. "I would not be so long away from your good father and mother. Of course you will be going somewhere to shoot after the 12th. So is Aubrey. Ladies have not much chance in comparison with the grouse. And, do you know, I thought them very much *failed*, both of them. They are getting old people, Randal. I am sure you are a good son, and would do anything you can to please them; and I could see that your good mother did not like you to come away for the fishing, though she would not say anything. As for Loch Katrine, I don't think it all likely that we shall be able to make it out."

Randal was at no loss to understand what this meant. He smiled to himself to think how mistaken she was, and how little it really mattered who went or stayed, so far as Margaret was concerned; but, after all, why should he follow Margaret? why should he run the risk of making himself hate Rob Glen, and wonder at his "luck" more than he did now? However, he said to himself, there ought not to be any danger of that. He did not think there was any danger. What danger could there be when there was a clear understanding that some one else was master of the field? But still, he could not suppose that the moment of fate, the tragical moment at which he could be of use to Margaret, was coming now. And why should he insist upon going where he was not wanted? So he yielded and sighed, and took his dismissal, though both the girls protested.

"Oh, why will you go and spoil the party?" cried Effie.

"My dear," said Mrs. Bellingham, "I am afraid there will not be much more of the party, for your papa is going to meet us in Glasgow to take you home."

This threw a cloud over poor little Effie, who went to her own room in tears. Was it over, then, this beautiful holiday? Margaret said good-bye to Randal with a cloudy look between smiles and tears.

"You will never pass me by again as if I was not good enough to be spoken to?" she said, with a little broken laugh; and he once more hurriedly adjured her "if she should ever want anything," "if she should want a friend to stand by her." Margaret smiled, and gave him her hand like a young princess. "But how can I ever want anybody," she said, "when there is Jean?" which was not so satisfactory. He felt more lonely, more dismal, more altogether out of place than there was any reason for, when, finally, Mrs. Bellingham packed her little comforts into the carriage, and Miss Grace entreated everybody to take her place, and the travellers rolled away, waving their hands to him as he stood at the inn door.

It is always a dismal thing to stand at the door of an inn and see the greater part of the

party who have been rambling, walking, talking, laughing, and crying together, drive away. Randal felt his heart sink in his breast. To be sure, Margaret Leslie was nothing to him, except a child whom he had known all his life. He stood there and fell a thinking, while the landlord nodded and winked to the waiter, and the maids behind pitied the poor young gentleman. How well he remembered the little motherless baby in her black ribbons, whom his mother had once placed in his astonished arms! He had told Margaret of it only yesterday; but he did not tell her what Mrs. Burnside said. "It will be time enough for you to marry, Randal, when she is old enough to be your wife," the prudent mother had said. She would never be his wife now, nor anybody's who could understand her who was worthy of her. To think of that creature falling to the lot of Rob Glen! The blood rushed to Randal's face, and he clenched his hands unawares; then, coming to himself, seized his fishing-tackle, which had been of so little use, and hurried away.

And Margaret was very quiet all the day after, leaving Effie to respond to Aubrey's witticisms from the box. It had come to be the habit that Effie should reply. Mrs. Bellingham was just as comfortably placed as usual, and had her eau-de-cologne, and her paper-knife, and plenty of shillings in her purse for the Highland tolls, and everything as she liked it; but she was not so amiable as in the earlier part of the journey. For one thing, there was not at all a satisfactory place for luncheon, and the wind was cold, and she had not the kind of large pin she liked to fasten her shawl.

"We are going to have a wet August," she said. "When August is wet, the best thing to do is to get out of Scotland. It is bad enough anywhere, but it is abominable in the Highlands. There are the same sort of looking tourists you find in Chamouni, only poorer, and it is cold, which it is not in Switzerland; at least, it is not always cold in Switzerland. Your papa, Effie, is to meet us in Glasgow on Tuesday, and then I think we shall go South."

Nobody said anything against this sentence. There are days when the wind is more keen than usual, when the rain is wetter, and the mud muddier. This was one of these days. It came down in torrents in the middle of the journey; and before the hood of the carriage could be got up a large piece of Mrs. Bellingham's crape on the side next the wind had been soaked and ruined forever. This, her sister thought, was her own fault, in that she had incautiously thrown aside her water-proof; but she herself held it to be Effie's, who had thrown a shawl over that water-proof, "carefully concealing it," the aggrieved lady said. To have your crape ruined when you have just gone into mourning is a grievance enough to upset any lady's temper, and it cannot be said that any of the party enjoyed the drive on this ill-fated day.

After this the pleasure of the expedition grew less and less. Sir Ludovic, who met the party in Glasgow, took an opportunity to take Margaret aside, and talked to her with a grave face.

"I hope you will see how wrong you are, Margaret," he said, "about that lad. I have seen him, and he is as firm as a rock because of your encouragement. Do you think it is a right thing

for a young girl like you to give such a man encouragement, and dispose of yourself without the knowledge of one of your friends? I told him I would never give my consent; but he as good as said he did not care a pin for my consent; that he had got yours, and that was all he wanted. But there is one thing I must insist upon, Margaret, and that is that you will hold no clandestine intercourse with him. It would not be—delicate, and it would not be honorable. It is only to save you that I don't tell Jean. Jean would be neither to hold nor to bind. I don't know what Jean might not do; but unless you will promise me that there shall be no correspondence, it is my duty to tell Jean."

"I don't wish to have any correspondence," said Margaret, drooping her head, with a burning blush. Oh, if they would but let her forget it all! But this was what they would not do.

"If you will give me your promise to that," he said; and in his pleasure at what seemed to him his little sister's dutifulness, Sir Ludovic took her hand into his and gave a fatherly kiss on her forehead; all which his sisters contemplated with wondering eyes.

"Dear Ludovic, how kind you are to darling Margaret!" cried Miss Grace, running to him and bestowing a kiss of her own by way of thanks.

"I see no need for all this kissing," said Mrs. Bellingham; "what is the meaning of it? I hope, Ludovic, you are not encouraging Margaret to make you her confessor, and to have secrets and mysteries from Grace and me, who are her natural guardians and her best friends!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was on a bright day in the end of August that Margaret Leslie arrived at the Grange, which was her own house, her mother's birth-place, and her future home. They had been rather more than a month on the way, and had last come from Mrs. Bellingham's house, which was in the neighborhood of Bellingham Court—not the great house of her district, but very near and closely related to that reigning mansion. Mrs. Bellingham had not been without grievances in her life. Indeed, had one of two events happened which she had every reason to expect would happen, her present position would have been different and much more satisfactory. Had her husband lived only a year longer, she would have been Lady Bellingham of the Court, the foremost lady in the county; and had she been the mother of a son, that son would have been Sir Somebody, and his mother would still have been—during his inevitably long minority at least—the mistress of the great house. But these two natural events did not happen. Jean was the mother of neither son nor daughter, and her husband, the eldest son—old Sir Anthony's heir—had cheated her effectually out of all share in the splendors of the house—which splendors, indeed, had been much more attractive than himself—by dying most spitefully a year before his father. If it had been a year after, she would not have minded so much. But as it was, there was nothing for it but to retire to the Dower House, and to see her next sister-in-law,

with whom she had not been on very affectionate terms, become Lady Bellingham, and enter into possession of everything. It may be supposed that this was no slight trial; but Jean, every one allowed, had behaved like a heroine. In the moment of deep and real affliction which followed old Sir Anthony's death, she had taken the situation under review, and considered it very deeply. The first suggestion naturally had been that she should return home, or at least settle in the neighborhood of her father's house. But Jean reflected that her father was not only old but poor, that his house was very limited in accommodation, and that when her present gloom and crape were over, there was neither amusement nor occupation to be had at Earl's-hall, such as might oil the wheels of life and enable everything to go smoothly. Life was not lively, nor was Earl's-hall attractive; whereas in the neighborhood of the Court, though it would be hard to see another woman reigning there, there was always likely to be something going on, and the family was of the first consequence in the district, not shabby and worn-out like the poor Leslies. Having come to this decision, Mrs. Bellingham had taken her measures accordingly. She had thrown off at once the natural air of grievance which everybody had excused in her after such disappointments. Instead of troubling the new Lady Bellingham in her arrangements, she had thrown herself heartily into the work, and aided her in every way in her power. "I don't mean to say that it is not a disappointment," she said; "I hoped, of course—I don't deny it—to be mistress here myself. I have worked for it: through all Sir Anthony's illness, I am sure, I never was less attentive to him because I knew I should be turned out as soon as he was released from his sufferings."

"No, I am sure you never were," said the new Sir Anthony, warmly.

"And I should have liked to be my lady, I don't deny it. If my poor Aubrey had lived, I should have enjoyed the position quite as much as you I hope will enjoy it, my dear."

"Oh, enjoy it! think of the responsibility!" cried the new Lady Bellingham.

"I should not have minded the responsibility; but Providence has settled otherwise—you have it, and I have not. But don't think I am going to be disagreeable on that account. I will move into the Dower House as soon as you please, and I will do everything I can to help you in settling down. I know how to struggle for my rights when it is necessary," Mrs. Bellingham had said, not without a warning glance at Sir Anthony, "but, thank Heaven, I also know how to submit."

In this spirit she had begun her life, and with the same noble meaning had lived many years a kind of secondary star in the Bellingham firmament, shining independently, but never in opposition. A close connection with the Court made the Dower House important, and she kept up that connection. She was always serviceable, giving as well as receiving, maintaining her own position, even while she magnified it by that of the great house; and, in short, nothing, all her friends allowed, could be more perfect than her behavior, which was everything a sister's ought to be, and everything that could be desired in an aunt. The Dower House was a pretty house,

and Mrs. Bellingham's jointure was sufficient to permit her a comfortable little carriage, a nice little establishment, with the means of giving excellent dinners when she chose, and enjoying life in a dignified and most comfortable way. On the other hand, she dined very often at the Court, and had the use of their superfluous luxuries, and a share in everything that was going on, which increased at once her comfort and her consequence. This was the position in which she stood to her relations and neighbors. She felt now that she was about to repay them a hundred-fold for all the little advantages they had thrown in her way by providing for Aubrey, who was her husband's godson, and the least successful member of the family. Aubrey was very accomplished, very charming, very idle. He could not be got to do anything, except make himself agreeable, and he had never even done that to any purpose. When Mrs. Bellingham heard that her father was dying, her first thought was of this. But she was a woman who could keep her own counsel. She sent Aubrey a check, and directions for his route: she threw facilities in his way, of which he did not, perhaps, quite make the use she expected; but still things had mended in the latter part of their journey, and Margaret and he had been very good friends when they parted, and all was well in train in pursuit of this purpose. Mrs. Bellingham carried her young sister to the Dower House, and showed her the greatness of the Court. It was vacant for the moment, but its imposing size and splendor filled Margaret with admiration.

"All this would have been mine, Margaret, if my poor dear Aubrey had lived. You may think what a grief it was to me to lose him," said Jean, with a sigh. "And that is why I take such deep interest in Aubrey, who was his godson, you know. This is Aubrey's home."

"Dearest Jean! how much more we ought to think of her, and try to please her, darling Margaret," said Miss Leslie; "when we see how much she has lost."

And when they had gone over all the empty stately rooms, and looked at all the portraits—docile Margaret receiving the tale of family grandeur with unquestioning assent—and had made acquaintance with the lesser world of the Dower House, its paddock, its gardens, its conservatory, all the little comforts and elegancies which were so dear to the sisters, it was time to set out for the Grange, that Margaret might see her own house. It had been settled that Mrs. Bellingham and Miss Leslie should go there with her to take possession of it, and to see what changes would require to be made, to fit it for occupation—and that they were to remain with her there as long as the fine weather lasted, going back to the Dower House for winter and Christmas. The Grange lay in another county, and was some distance from the house of the Bellingham's, with which it communicated only by a very circuitous route. In old days, when the ladies would have been obliged to post, it would have taken days instead of hours to get to it, and yet it would have proved a nearer way. They had to go to the nearest town and then take a train going north, in order to find at the junction a train going south, in which they could proceed to the end of their journey. And what between the changes, and the waiting here and there, this

journey occupied most part of the day. It was dark when they drove from the little town where the railway ended, through a succession of dim roads and lanes and under overshadowing trees that made the twilight dimness greater, to the Grange: which presented no recognizable feature, but was merely a large shadow in the gloom surrounded by shadows less solid—ghosts of waving trees and high hedge-rows. There was a woman visible at the little lodge, who came out and opened the gate and courtesied to the strangers, leaving her cottage door open and showing a cheerful glow of fire-light, and a tiny little girl of three or four years old, standing against the light and gazing at the carriage; but this was the only gleam of cheerfulness that dwelt in Margaret's mind. The child's face was scarcely visible, but its little sturdy figure against the fire-light, with two small feet well apart, and the most wondering curiosity in its entire pose, made the forlorn little mistress of the place smile as she went through those gates which led to her home. After this there was a long avenue to drive through, with great trees overshadowing the carriage, and tossing their branches about in the night wind. It had been a very hot day, and the breeze which had sprung up was very grateful, but the moaning it made in the branches was very melancholy, and affected poor Margaret's imagination. "How the wind *soughs*," she said, with full use of the dreary guttural. She was sitting in the front seat of the cab as it jolted along amidst all those waving shadows, and Margaret felt very sad, she did not know why. She had been curious about her sister's house, and interested, and had liked the novelty and perpetual change; but she did not feel any curiosity, nothing but sadness, in coming to this place, which was her own, though there was nobody here to welcome her. How the wind *soughed*! no other word could express so well the wild moan and wailing, which is an exaggeration by nature of the sound which the French call *tears in the voice*. It went to Margaret's heart: the tears came into her voice, too, and filled her eyes in the darkness. All was melancholy in this home-coming to nothing but darkness and the unknown—the wind tossing about the branches and complaining to the night, the sound of water somewhere, complaining too, with a feeble tinkle—the sky invisible, except in a speck here and there, just light enough to show how the branches were tossing overhead. The young traveller drooped her head in her corner, and felt her courage and her heart fail.

"Margaret," said Jean's voice out of the darkness, from the other side of the carriage, "you must learn to remember now that you are not a Scotch country girl in Fife, but an English young lady with a character to keep up—a landed proprietor. Don't talk that vulgar Scotch. If you use such language here nobody will understand you; and they will think you a girl without any education, which would be most painful for all your relatives, and a slur upon poor papa's memory. Therefore remember, no Scotch."

This altogether completed Margaret's downfall. The gloom, the sobbing wind, the contrast between this home-coming and all that is ordinarily implied in the word, were enough in themselves to overwhelm so young a creature, still so short a way removed from the first grief of her life; but the reproof was of a kind which made

the contrast still more poignant. Nothing in all his intercourse with his favorite child had been so tender or so characteristic as Sir Ludovic's soft, laughing animadversions upon that very point—"My little Peggy, you must not be so Scotch!" How often had he said it, his face lighted up with tenderest laughter, his reproof more sweet than other people's praise. But how different it sounded when Jean said it! Something came climbing into Margaret's throat and choked her. When the carriage stopped with a jar and a crash, as it did at that moment at the scarcely discernible door, she could not wait for its opening, or till the coachman should scramble from his perch, but flung the carriage door open, and jumped out, eager for movement of any kind; her forehead throbbing with pain over her eyebrows, the sob in her throat, and a sudden gush of salt-water, hot and bitter, blinding her eyes. What could be more unlucky than to alight thus before the closed door and not be able to see it for tears? It opened, however, while Margaret began to help Steward, who had groped her way from the box, to get out the innumerable small articles with which the cab was crowded. The country girl, who appeared at the door with a candle protected by a long glass shade in her hand, did not imagine for a moment that the slim creature not so big as herself, with the armful of cloaks and shawls, was her mistress. She addressed herself to the ladies in the carriage, as was natural.

"If you please, ma'am," she said, making a courtesy, "Miss Parker have gone to bed with a bad headache; but please there's tea in the parlor, and all your rooms is ready."

Margaret, however, scarcely saw the dark wainscoted room into which she followed her sisters, hearing their voices and exclamations as in a dream. It only seemed to Margaret to look very dark, very cold, with its gleams of reflections. Her little white-panelled room at home was far more cheerful than this dark place. She heard them say it was lovely! perfect! in such good keeping! without paying any attention. It was not in keeping with Margaret. In all her life she had never felt such a poor little melancholy stranger, such a desolate childish atom in an unknown world, as during this first hour in the house which belonged to her, the place where she was absolute mistress.

Finding that there was nothing to be made of her, that she would neither eat the plentiful fare on the table, nor admire the china in the great open cupboards, nor make herself amiable in any way, Mrs. Bellingham gave her a cup of warm tea and sent her to bed; where Steward, with a little pity, deferring her mistress's unpacking, benevolently followed to help her to undress. They had put her into a large, low, many-latticed room, with that mixture in it of venerable mansion and homely cottage which is the dream of such rural houses; but in the darkness made visible by two poor candles, even that was little more cheerful than the dark parlor with its wainscot. At Earl's-hall, even in August, there might have been a little friendly fire to make a stranger at home; but in "the South—!" How many a pang of cold have we all supported in much warmer latitudes than England, for very shame because of "the South!"

Naturally, however, Margaret could not sleep,

though she was glad to be alone. She kept her candle lighted, to bear her company with something of a child's dread of the darkness, and lay thinking with eyes preternaturally awake, now that the tears had been all wept out. She thought of everything—of Earl's-hall, and the rhythm of the pines which were not like that rainy melancholy *sough*, and of those moments in the wood when she had gone out with her eyes just so hot with tears unshed, and just such a fiery throbbing of pain in her forehead, and choking in her throat. And oh, how kind *he* had been! he had not thought of himself, but only of comforting her. How he had drawn her to him, made her lean upon him, taken off the weight of her sorrow. How hard-hearted she had been to poor Rob, never thinking of him all these days, glad to escape from the thought of him. And he had been so kind! A great compunction came into her mind. How much he had been mingled in the twist of her life at that time which of all other times had been the most momentous in it! and how was it possible that when that crisis was over her very fancy should have so fled from him, her thoughts thrust him away? Poor Rob! and he had been so kind! Margaret begged his pardon in her heart with great self-reproach, but it did not occur to her to make him any amends. She had no desire to call him back to her, to see him again, to write to him. Oh no! she drew her breath hard, with a sudden panic: why should she write to him? It was not necessary. She could not write at all a nice letter such as would be a pleasure to any one. But the thought seemed to catch her very breath, her heart began to thump again, and her brow to burn and throb.

"Are you asleep, dear Margaret?" said Grace, coming in. "I just ran up-stairs for a moment to see. Dearest Jean is going over the rooms, to see what sort of rooms they are—not that we can see very much at night; and, of course, darling Margaret, I should like much better, and so would dear Jean, to wait till you were with us yourself; and if you would like me to stay with you, I would much rather stay. I shouldn't at all mind giving it up. So far as one can see, it is the dearest old place, so old-fashioned! and such china, and old armor in the hall!—real armor, just as delightful as what you see in Wardour Street. Dear Jean is so pleased. Now do go to sleep, darling Margaret, go to sleep. The wainscot parlor is the dearest old room, just like a picture. I am to go out and join dear Jean on the stairs when I hear her coming up. She is talking to Steward about unpacking, for dear Jean is very particular about her unpacking. Are you asleep, darling?—not yet? but you must really go to sleep, and be quite fresh for to-morrow. That is right, shut your eyes, and I will shade the candle; or perhaps it would be better to have a night-light; I think I must try to get you a night-light. There is dear Jean coming up the stairs. She enjoys anything like this. That is her voice coming up. You can always hear dear Jean's voice, walking about a house. At the Dower House, when I am in my room, I always hear her at night starting to see that all the doors and windows are safe. She begins with the scullery and goes everywhere. Dear Jean is energetic to a fault. She does not mind what trouble she takes. Now you are

asleep, darling Margaret, quite fast: hush—hush!" said Miss Grace, patting her shoulder softly. It was not a very sensible proceeding, but it soothed Margaret. She turned round her cheek, still wet with tears, with a soft laugh, which was half derision and half pleasure.

"I am fast asleep; now run, Grace, run, or Jean will scold you."

"Oh, it is not that I am afraid! but really, really if you are going to sleep, and don't want me to stay—I will stay in a moment if you would like it, darling Margaret; but perhaps I should only keep you from sleeping, and dear Jean—"

"Where has she run to now?" they could hear Jean's voice saying at a distance, and Miss Grace gave her young sister a hasty kiss and hurried away. Margaret lay still and listened for a long time while Jean's voice perambulated the house, going everywhere. It gave a new sort of brisk activity to the dark and cold place. Up and down and about the passages went the high-pitched tones, commenting on everything. It was seldom that Margaret could make out what they said. But the sound made a cheer and comfort, a sense of society and protection. By-and-by she got drowsy with those cheerful echoes in her ears, and dropped at last into the deep sleep of youth, with a sense of this peaceful patrolling all about her, the darkness lighted by gleams of the candles they carried, and by Jean's voice.

And in the morning what a flood of sunshine filled the room! lavish, extravagant sunshine pouring in, as if it had nothing else to do; which indeed was pretty nearly the case, as all the harvest was housed about the Grange, and there was not much, except light matters of fruit, for that magnificent sun to do, nothing but to ripen the peaches on the walls and the apples on the trees, and wake for a joke, with a blaze and illumination which might have done for a king, a little bit of a slim girl in the low-roofed chamber with its many windows. Margaret woke all in a moment, as you wake with a start when some one stands and looks at you fixedly, penetrating the strongest bond of drowsiness. She sprang up, her mind already full of excitement as she recollected where she was: in the Grange, in her own house! a curious thrill of pleasure, and wonder, and eager curiosity came over her. She got up and dressed hastily in her eagerness to see her surroundings.

From her windows she looked out upon nothing but trees, a walled garden on one side, a little park on the other, a glimpse of a small stream with a little wooden bridge over it, and trees, and more trees as far as the eye could go. Her eye went as far as eye could go in that unconscious appeal for something to rest upon which is instinctively made by all who are accustomed to hills; but there was no blue line upon the horizon, no undulation to relieve her. The only inequality was in the trees, which were some lower and some more lofty—in tufts of rich foliage everywhere, shading the landscape like a delicate drawing. Though it would not be September till next day, yet there were already traces here and there that autumn had tinted the woods with that "fiery finger." It was nothing more than a touch; but it brightened the picture. How different from the parched elms and oaks

all bare with the wind, and the dark unchanging firs in the Earl's-hall woods!

The house was still asleep when she stole downstairs, half afraid of herself, down the oak staircase, with its heavy balustrade. She was the only thing waking in the silent house, which still was so full of living, waking sunshine. She seemed to herself to be the last survivor—the only inhabitant. Timorously she stole down, finding shutters at all the windows, bolts at all the doors. At Earl's-hall who ever dreamed of a bolt or a bar! The door was "sneaked" when John thought of it, but often enough was left on the latch, so that any one might have come in; but very different were the precautions here. She stole about on tiptoe, peeping here and there, feeling herself an intruder, totally unable to believe that all this was hers; and very much frightened by the noise she made, undid the heavy fastenings and opened the great door, which creaked and clanged as if calling for help against some invader.

The dew was still sparkling on the flowers when she issued forth into the fresh air of the morning, doubly refreshed with last night's showers. The birds were singing, nations and tribes of them, in every tree. They made such a din round her as she stepped out that she could scarcely hear herself thinking. Instinctively Margaret ran down to the little brook, which she called (to herself) the burn. And there, looking back, she stood entranced with a novel delight. She had never before seen anything like it. A great old rambling simple-minded English house, of old brick with a bloom on it, and touches of lichen, golden and gray: covered with verdure, nothing new or petty; the very honeysuckles grown into huge trees, forests of the simplest white clematis, the traveller's joy, with its wild wreaths and sweet clusters of flowers, roses in their second bloom mounting up to the old chimneys, which had retreated into great bushes of ivy; and everywhere through a hundred folds and wreaths of green—everywhere the mellow redness of the old house itself peeping through. Margaret clasped her hands in delight. The landscape was nothing but trees, and had little interest for her; but the house! It was itself like a great flower, all warm and strong. And this was hers! She could not believe it. She stood rapt, and gazed at the perfect place—a mass of flowers and leafage, and bloomy old walls. It was a poem in homely red and brown, an autumnal sonnet. And this was hers! She could not believe it—it was too beautiful to be true.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER this there ensued a moment of great quiet and pleasant domestic life. Miss Parker, who was the house-keeper, was a very legitimate member of the class which nobody had then thought of calling Lady-help, but which flourished in the shadow and protection of a family as Poor Relation. She was a distant cousin of Margaret's mother, who, having no money and no talents of any serviceable sort, had been kindly provided for in this very natural domestic office; and the good woman took a great deal of interest in Margaret, and would not have at all dis-

liked to inspire her with rebellion, and persuade her to make a stand for "her own place" in her own house. That the other family, the other side of the house, should be regnant at the Grange, making Margaret appear like the daughter rather than the mistress, offended her in every point; but as she was not a wicked woman, and Margaret not a rebellious girl, these little intentions of malice came to nothing, and Jean commenced an unquestioned and on the whole beneficent sway with little resistance. As for Margaret herself, the novelty of everything filled her life with fresh springs of enjoyment, and gave her a genuine new beginning, not counter to the natural, nor in any way antagonistic, but yet genuinely novel, fresh, and unconnected with any painful or disturbing recollection.

The soft unlikeness of the leafy English landscape round, to all she had been used to, was not more marked than the other differences of her life. When she went along the rural road the little girls courtesied to her, and so did the women at the cottage-doors; they stood obsequious in their own houses, when she went to see them, as if she had been the Queen; not like the cottagers about Earl's-hall, to whom she was only Miss Margaret, who courtesied to nobody, and who were more likely to offer the little girl "a piece" or a "drink of milk" than to take the surreptitious shillings which Margaret at the Grange was so delighted to find herself able to give. "But they will be affronted!" she said, in horror, when this liberality was first suggested to her; such a difference was there between Fife and "the South." Then, within reach, there lay a beautiful little church, in which there were monuments and memorial marbles without number to the Sedleys, the family of her mother, the owners of the Grange, and where an anxious new incumbent had established daily service, to which he was very anxious the Leslies at the Grange should come by way of setting a good example. To this admirable man, who thought that within the four seas there was no salvation except in the Anglican Communion, Margaret unguardedly avowed, knowing no harm in it, that she had been brought up in the Church of Scotland, and was not very familiar with the prayer-book. Oh, what daggers Jean looked at her, poor Margaret not knowing why! Mrs. Bellingham made haste to explain.

"My father was old-fashioned, Mr. St. John, and never would give up the old kirk. I think he thought it was right to go, to countenance the common people. I always say it is a disgrace, that it is they who have the parish churches in Scotland, just the set of people who are dissenters here; but I assure you all the gentry go to the English Church."

Mr. St. John, though he was a little appalled by that generalization, and did not like to learn that "the common people" were dissenters, or that any church but the Anglican could be called "old," yet nevertheless was not so shocked as he might have been, thinking, good man, that the common people in Fife probably spoke Gaelic, and that this was the reason why they had their service separate from the gentry. He began immediately to talk to Margaret about the beauty and pathos of Celtic music, which bewildered her extremely, for naturally Margaret Leslie, who had scarcely ever been out of the East

Neuk till her father's death, had never heard a word of Gaelic in her life.

And now at last Bell's fondest desires were carried out. The little town which was near, and which the lessening limits of this history forbid us to touch upon, was a cathedral town full of music and with many educational advantages; for there were numerous schools in the neighborhood, and masters came from town to supply the demand two or three times a week. Margaret began to play upon the "pian," as Bell had always longed to have her do, and to speak French. We cannot assert that she made very much progress in the former accomplishment with her untrained fingers and brief patience; but she had a pretty voice and learned to sing, which is perhaps a rarer gift, though it cannot be denied that she abused this privilege and went about the house and the garden, and even the park, singing at the top of her voice, till her sisters were provoked into expostulation. "What is the use of teaching you," Jean cried, "when you go singing, singing—skirling they would call it in Fife—straining all your high notes? When I was a girl like you, I was never allowed to open my mouth except for practising, and when there was an occasion for it. It is all gone now, but I assure you when I was twenty I was considered to have a very pretty voice. I wish yours may ever be as good. It will not be so long if you go straining it in this way. Do you think the birds want to hear you singing?" cried Mrs. Bellingham, with scorn.

"Oh, dearest Jean! but dear Margaret has much more of a voice than we ever had. We used to sing duets—"

"Yes, Grace had a little chirp of a second—just what you will come to, Margaret," said Mrs. Bellingham, "if you go on as you are doing, straining all your high tones."

As for the French, they found fault with her pronunciation, which was natural enough; but perhaps it was not so natural that Mrs. Bellingham should find fault with the irreproachable accent of Monsieur Dubois, a Parisian, *pur sang*, who had taught princesses in his day. "No, Margaret, my dear; you may go on with him; for any kind of French is better than none, when you are so far behind with your education. But I am sure he is taking all these good people in with his fine certificates and testimonials. His French cannot be good, for *I don't understand a word he says!*" Thus the autumn went on: the trees about the Grange got aglow, and began to blaze with glorious colors, and Margaret with her crape getting shabby (crape gets shabby so soon, heaven be praised!) ran about the house, the park, the country roads, and the village, scolded, petted, taken care of, watched over, teased and worried, and made much of, as she had never been before. She had been the child at Earl's-hall, whose innocent faults everybody had smiled at, whose innocent virtues had met the same fate, who was indeed the spring of everybody's happiness, the most cherished, the most beloved—but yet, so to speak, of no importance at all. Here it was different; here everything hinged on Margaret. Jean, though she was a despot, insisted loudly on the fact that she was but a despot-regent, and Margaret's name was put to everything, and Margaret's supremacy upheld, though Margaret herself was scolded.

What difference it might have made in this state of affairs, had little Margaret, Sir Ludovic's orphan child, been dependent upon her sisters, as, but for that mother of hers of whom Margaret knew nothing, she well might have been, it would be impossible to say. They would have done her "every justice;" they would have taught her to sing and scolded her for singing; they would have called in Monsieur Dubois, and then declared his French could not be good; all these things would have happened all the same, and they would have meddled with and dictated to, and teased, and tried, their little sister. But whether the process would have been as bearable as it was under the present circumstances, who can tell? The dependent might have felt that insupportable which tempted the heiress into laughter, and disclosed a fund of mirth within which she did not know she possessed.

One thing, however, Jean would not have done had Margaret been penniless, which she did for Margaret as the young lady of the Grange. She certainly would not have invited Aubrey, after his return from Scotland, to come and see the new horse that had been bought for Margaret, and to superintend her instructions in that kind. The girl had ridden at home, cantering about the country, all unattended, on a gray pony, in a gray garment, which bore but a faint resemblance to the pretty habit in which she was now clothed; but she had never mounted anything like the prancing steed which was now to be called hers. The sisters were a great deal too careful of her to allow this fiery steed to be mounted until after Margaret and the horse had received all kinds of preparation for the conjunction; but when the ladies came out to superintend the start, and watched while Aubrey, newly arrived, put the slim light creature upon her horse, Jean and Grace felt a movement of pride in her, which made the more emotional sister cry, and swelled Mrs. Bellingham's bosom with triumph. "Take care of her," she said to her nephew with a meaning glance, "for you will not find many like her."

"I will take care," said Aubrey, returning the look. This Mrs. Bellingham would not have done had Margaret been only her little sister without any fortune, instead of the young lady of the Grange.

It was a very pleasant ride, and it was so different from all her former exercises of the kind that it became one of those points in Margaret's life which tell like milestones when one looks back. She did not talk very much after the first delighted outbreak of pleasure; but in her heart went back to the stage of the gray pony, and with a startled sense of the change in everything round her, contemplated herself. What change had passed upon her? Was it only that she was a little taller, a little older, transplanted into new surroundings, separated altogether by death and distance from the group of old people who had been all her world? Not altogether that: there were other changes too important to be fully fathomed during a ride through the green lanes, and under the falling leaves. She rode along, hearing vaguely what Aubrey said to her, making only what response was necessary, wondering over this being who was, yet was not, herself. She had forgotten all about herself so far as that was possible in the novelty of this new chapter of her career. She had lived only from day to day,

from moment to moment, not asking herself what she was doing, how she was changing; and so she was changed. She found it out all in a moment. It bewildered and turned her head, and made her so giddy, that her companion thought she had taken a panic and was going to fall. He started and put out his hand to hold her.

"Oh, it is nothing," Margaret said; "it is over now; it was all so strange."

"What was strange? You are ill, you are giddy, you have got nervous."

"Yes, I am giddy; but neither ill nor nervous. I am giddy to think—oh, how strange it is! Do you remember, Mr. Aubrey, when we were in the Highlands in August?"

"Nearly three months ago. Indeed, I remember very well. Do you think it is likely I should forget?"

"Oh, I don't suppose it was much to you," said Margaret, with an abstraction of tone which prevented him, though very willing, from accepting this as provocative of something like flirtation. "It was myself that I was thinking of, and it made me giddy. Since that time I am quite different. Since then I have grown up."

"I don't see very much difference," said Aubrey, contemplating her with those pleased looks of unspoken admiration which he knew did not in general afford an ungrateful mode of homage.

"Oh! perhaps I have not grown much taller; but this is more than tallness. Do you remember Earl's-hall, Mr. Aubrey? It is not really, is it, so very far away?"

"I should not say so—about fifteen or sixteen hours' journey, if the railway went straight, without that horrid interval of the Firth."

"Oh, that was not what I was meaning!" said Margaret, turning her head away a little coldly. And though he went on talking, she did not pay much attention. She came home with dreamy eyes, and suffered him to lift her off her horse, and went straight up to her room, leaving him. They had not ridden quite so far as they intended, and the ladies had not got home from their drive.

As Margaret went up-stairs, carrying her train over her arm, she met Miss Parker, her poor relation, on the stairs, who gave a jump at the sight of her, and uttered a cry.

"Oh, my dear, I thought you were a ghost!" she said.

"Why should I be a ghost? I don't feel like a ghost. Come in and tell me," said Margaret, opening the door of her room. Miss Parker had palpitations, and this was quite enough to bring one of them on.

"I never thought you were like your poor mamma before," cried the house-keeper in her agitation, "not a bit like. You are just like the Leslies, not her features at all; but in that habit, and in the very same hat and feathers!" Margaret took off her hat at these words, and Miss Parker breathed a little more freely. "Ah, that is better, that is not so startling. You were as like her, as like her—"

"Why should not I be like her? Poor mamma, it is hard upon her having nothing but me to leave in the world, that I should be so unkind as not to be like her," said Margaret, musing, half thinking through the midst of this conversation how strange it was that Earl's-hall should seem so very far away.

"I remember her as well as if it were yesterday," said Miss Parker, "coming up that very stair after her last ride with—oh, I should not speak of him to you! It was before she had ever seen Sir Ludovic, your papa."

"Her last ride with—whom?" Margaret's cheeks grew crimson. Somehow it seemed to be half herself about whom she was hearing—herself in her mother.

"Oh, my dear! I don't know if I ought to tell you all that story. They were a sort of cousins, as I was to them both. He had no money, poor fellow; but otherwise so suitable! just of an age, brought up much the same—and she was an heiress, if he had nothing. They tried to put it into her head that he was not good enough for her. And then they put it into his head (they succeeded there) that a man ought not to owe his living to his wife. So he would go away, let her say what she pleased. Oh, I remember that night when they took their last ride together. She came up-stairs and met me in her riding-habit, in just such a hat and feathers, and her face pale with thinking, like yours, my dear. She changed color, too, like you (ah, there it goes!), all in a moment changing from white to red."

"And what happened," cried Margaret, breathless.

"Well, my dear, nothing more than this happened— He went away. He went to India with his regiment; he thought he might get on there, perhaps, and get his promotion, and come back for her (she was not of age then). But he never came back, poor fellow—he died in less than a year."

"And she—she?" Margaret became breathless with anxiety and interest. She had not known her mother had any story; and how strange it was—half as if it might be herself!

"She felt it very much, my dear. She put on mourning for him—indeed, she had to do that, for he was her cousin. Memorial windows were just coming into fashion, and she put up a window to his memory in the church. Well, then! after a while, she went to Scotland, and met with Sir Ludovic. He was not young, but he was a most striking-looking gentleman—and—well, I need not tell you any more. You know, as well as I can tell you, that *he* was your papa."

"Poor papa!" said Margaret, her eyes filling, though she had said "poor mamma" a moment before. "Did she care for him at all?"

"Oh, my dear! she was in *love* with him, a great deal more in love with him than she ever was with poor Edward. She *would* have him. Of course it was pointed out to her that he was poor, too, and living so far away, and a Scotchman, which is almost like a foreigner, and quantities of poor relations. She must have liked him more than she did poor Edward, for she would not listen, not for a moment; even when it was said that he was old, she cried, 'What do I care?' Oh, you must not think there was any doubt on that point. She was very fond of your papa. That is poor Edward's picture in the corner," said Miss Parker, crying a little, "he never had eyes for any one when she was there; but he was my cousin too."

Margaret got up tremulously, and went to look at the portrait. It was a feeble little water-color: a young man in a coat which had once

been intended to be red, but which had become the palest of pink. When she looked at his insignificant good-looking features, she could not but remember her father's with a glow of pride. But Miss Parker was crying softly in the corner of the sofa. Why does it always happen that people are at cross-purposes in loving? Miss Parker would have been very happy with Edward: why was it not she but the other whom the young soldier loved? It made Margaret sad to think of it. And then all at once there came into her mind, like a pebble cast into tranquil water, Rob Glen. Something in the features of poor Edward, who had died in the jungle, recalled Rob to her mind. Her heart began to beat. Perhaps, no doubt, there was some one who would be very happy to have Rob, who would think him the noblest man in existence. And Margaret gave a little shiver. Suddenly it came to her mind with overpowering force that, notwithstanding all these changes, notwithstanding the difference in herself, notwithstanding the Grange and all its novel life, she, this new Margaret, who was so different from the old Margaret, was bound to Rob Glen. It seemed to her that she had never understood the position before. Miss Parker had gone away crying, poor, sentimental, middle-aged lady! and Margaret sat down on the sofa when she had left it, with dismay in her heart, and gazed at Edward's water-color with blank discomfiture. There seemed to rise before her the little parlor in the farm—every detail of its homely aspect; the red and blue cloth on the table, the uncomfortable scratching of the pen with which she wrote her promise, the bit of paper smoothed out by Mrs. Glen's hand, the little common earthenware ink-bottle.

She had not been aware before that she remembered all these things; but now they started to the light, as if they were things of importance, all visible before her, remade. How was it possible that she could have put them all away out of her memory so long? She had thought of him now and then, chiefly with compunctions, feeling herself ungrateful to him who had been so kind. But it was not with any compunction now that she remembered him, but with sudden alarm and sense of an incongruity beyond all words. Supposing Edward had not died, but had come back from the jungle after her mother had met Sir Ludovic, what would she have thought? how would she have felt? would she have welcomed him or fled from him? But then I—have never seen—any one, Margaret said to herself. She blushed, though she was alone. There was nothing in that—her color was always coming and going—and even this momentary change of sentiment relieved her a little. The horror was to have remembered, all of a sudden, in this calm and quiet—Rob Glen.

When such a sudden revelation as this occurs, it is astonishing how heaven and earth concur to keep the impression up. Next evening their dinner was more lively than usual. To keep Aubrey company over his wine, Mrs. Bellingham had invited Mr. St. John, the young rector (though they were in such deep mourning, your parish clergyman is never out of place, he is not company), to dine with them; and there was a little more care than usual about the flowers on the table (since the garden-flowers were exhausted, Jean had restricted the article of flowers),

and a more elaborate meal than was ever put upon the table for the three ladies. Mr. St. John was High-Church, and had been supposed to incline toward celibacy for the clergy, but of late his principles had been wavering. The elder ladies at the Grange had given him no rest on the subject; they had declared the idea to be Popish, infidelistic, heathen. Not marry? Grace in particular had almost wept over this strange theory. What was to become of a parish without a lady to look after it; and by this time Mr. St. John had been considerably moved by one of two things, either by the arguments of Mrs. Bellingham and Miss Leslie, or by the consideration that the Grange was very near the rectory; that it was a very nice little property, the largest house in the parish, its inhabitants the most important family; and that its heirress was eighteen, and very pretty, though brought up a Presbyterian, and probably, therefore, quite unregenerate, and as good as unbaptized. He sat opposite Margaret at the table, while Aubrey Bellingham sat by her, and the young priest felt an unchristian warmth of enmity arise in his bosom toward the stranger. But this put him on his mettle, and the talk was very lively and sometimes amusing; it made Margaret forget the fright of recollection that had seized her. The two young men remained but a very short time in the dining-room after the ladies had left, and Mr. St. John had just managed to get possession of a seat beside Margaret and to resume the question of the Celtic music, which he had so skilfully hit upon at one of their earlier meetings, as a subject sure to interest her, when an incident occurred that threw back all her thoughts vividly into their former channel.

"Don't you think that the invariably pathetic character of their music reflects the leading tendency of the race?" Mr. St. John had just said; and she was actually making what she felt to be a very foolish answer.

"I have heard the pipes playing," she was saying, "but not often; and except reels, I don't know any— Did you call me, Jean?"

"Here is a parcel for you, a large parcel by the railway," said Mrs. Bellingham. "Yes, really; it is not for me, as I thought, but for you, Margaret. What can it be, I wonder? It has got Edinburgh on the ticket, and a great many other marks. Bland, will you please undo it carefully, and take away all the brown paper and wrappings. I dare say it is a present, Margaret; it looks to me like a present. I should say it was a picture; perhaps something Ludovic may have sent you from Earl's-hall. Was there any picture you were fond of that can have been sent to you from Earl's-hall?"

"Dearest Margaret, it will be one of the portraits. How kind of dear Ludovic to think of you. Surely you have a right to it," said Miss Leslie; and even the young men drew near with the lively curiosity which such an arrival always creates. The very name of picture made Margaret tremble; she approached the large white square which Bland—Jean's most respectable servant—had carefully freed from the rough sheets of card-board and brown paper in which it had been so carefully packed, with the thrill of a presentiment. Miss Leslie's fingers quivered with impatience to cut the last string, to unfold the last enclosure, but a heroic sense of duty to

Margaret kept her back. It was Margaret's parcel: she it was who had the right to disclose the secret, to have the first exquisite flutter of discovery. Grace knew the value of these little sensations against the gray background of monotonous life. But it seemed to Margaret that she knew what it was, even although she had no recollection for the moment what it could be. She unfolded the last cover with a trembling hand.

Ah! It was Earl's-hall, the old house, exactly as it had been that sunshiny morning before any trouble came—when little Margaret, thinking no evil, went skimming over the furrows of the potatoes, running up and down as light as air, hovering about the artist whose work seemed to her so divine. What an ocean of time and change had swept over her since then! She gave a tremulous cry full of wonder and anguish, as she saw at a glance what it was. They all gathered round her, looking over her shoulder. There it stood, with the sun shining full upon it, the old gray house: the big ivy leaves giving out gleams of reflection, the light blazing upon Bell's white apron—for Bell, too, was there: he had forgotten nothing. Margaret's heart gave a beat so wild that the little group round her must have heard it, she thought.

"Earl's-hall!" said both the ladies together. "And, dear me, Margaret, where has this come from?" said Mrs. Bellingham; "Ludovic had no picture like this. It is beautifully mounted, and quite fresh and new; it must be just finished. It is very pretty. There is the terrace in the tower, you can just make it out—and there are the windows of the long room; and there, I declare, is my room, just a corner of it, and somebody sitting at the door—why, it is something like Bell! Who can have sent you such a beautiful present, Margaret? Who can it be from?"

Margaret gained a little time while her sister spoke; but she was almost too much agitated to be able to say anything, and she did not know what to say.

"It was a friend," she said, with trembling lips. "It was done—before— It was not finished." And then, taking courage from desperation, she added, "May I take it up-stairs?"

What so natural as that she should be overwhelmed by the sudden sight of her old home? Grace rushed to her with open arms. "Let me carry it for you; let me go with you, darling Margaret," she said. But the girl fled from her, almost pushing her away in the nervous impatience of agitation. Even Jean was moved. She called back her sister imperatively, yet with a softened voice.

"Let her alone; let her carry it herself. Come here, Grace, and let the child alone," said Mrs. Bellingham. "The sight of the old place has been too much for her, coming so suddenly—and not much wonder. After all, it is but four months. But I should like to know who did it, and who sent it," she added. That was the thought that was foremost with Aubrey too.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THIS incident completed the painful process which was going on in Margaret's mind. The little visionary link of kindness, tenderness, gratitude; which had existed between herself and Rob Glen had been really broken by the shock administered to her on the evening when she pledged herself to him forever; but she had never attempted to realize her feelings, or inquire into them—rather had been glad to forget them, to push away from her and postpone all consideration of the subject which all at once had become so painful, so full of difficulty and confusion. She had avoided even the idea of any communication with him. When Ludovic spoke to her of correspondence, it had seemed impossible that the pledge he asked for could be necessary, or that there should be any question of correspondence. She had never thought of it, never meant it. There was her promise against her which sometime or other must be redeemed. There was the fact that Rob had parted from her like a lover, a thing which it now made her blush hotly to recollect, but which then had seemed part of the confused strangeness of everything—a proof of his “kindness,” that kindness for which she had never been so grateful as she ought to have been. These were appalling certainties which overshadowed her life; but then, nothing could come of them for a long time, that was certain; three immense lifetimes of years stood between her and anything that could be done to her in consequence.

And how familiar we all become with the Damocles sword of an impending, but uncertain event!—Margaret had been able to escape for a long time, and had put all thought of it aside. But her mother's story had recalled one aspect of her own, and here was another, bursting upon her distinct and vivid, which could not be pushed aside, which must be faced, and even explained. Heaven help her! She carried away the big drawing in her arms, her heart thumping against the card-board wildly with suffocating force, her head throbbing, her mind in the most violent commotion. Had there been nothing else, no doubt the sudden recalling of all her thoughts to her old home, without any warning, in a moment, must have had a certain effect upon her. Even Jean had fully acknowledged this. It was natural that she should feel it. But something much more agitating, something more even than the bewildering thought of all that had happened in the last few weeks of her stay at Earl's-hall, came upon her with the first glimpse of the picture. Recollections rushed upon her like a torrent, recollections even more confusing, more painful than these. The drawing itself was a memorial of the time when there was no trouble at all involved, when Rob, newly discovered, was a curiosity and delight to the young creature in quest of something new, to whom he was a godsend; and this it was which suddenly came before her now.

There is no such anguish of retrospection as that with which the very young look back upon moments in which they feel they have made themselves ridiculous, and given their fellow-creatures an inferior, inadequate representation of them. This it was which overwhelmed Margaret now. She had acquired a little knowl-

edge, if from nothing else, from the conversation of Mrs. Bellingham, which had modified her innocence. She had heard of girls who “flung themselves at the heads” of men. She had heard of those who gave too much “encouragement,” who “led on” reluctant wooers. This talk had passed lightly enough over her head, always full of dreams; but yet it had left a deposit as so much light talk does.

When first her eyes fell upon the picture, this was the thought that rushed upon her. Almost before the ready tear had formed which came at the sight of Earl's-hall, before the quick pang of grief for the loss of all which the old house represented to her, before the sense of fatal bondage and entanglement which was her special burden, had time to make itself felt—came, with a flood of agony and shame, a realization of herself as she had been when Rob Glen had seated himself at the end of the potato field to make this drawing.

Other things that had happened to her had not involved any fault of hers; she did not even feel that she was seriously to blame for the forging of the chain that bound her—but this, this had been her own doing. She it was who had wooed him to Earl's-hall; she had asked him to come, and to come again; she had persuaded him to a hundred things he never would have thought of by himself. But for her he would not have returned day by day, getting more and more familiar. When she rushed about everywhere for the things he wanted, when she admired everything he did with such passionate enthusiasm, when she could hang over his shoulder watching every line he drew, what had she been doing? “Flinging herself at his head,” “leading him on,” “encouraging him,” oh, and more than encouraging him! as Ludovic had said. This was worse even than the bondage in which it had resulted. Her face was covered with burning blushes; her soul overflowed with shame.

Oh, how well she recollected the ridiculous ardor with which she had taken up her old play-fellow; the sense of some new delightful event which had come into her life when she met him, and discovered his sketches, and appropriated him, as it were, to her own amusement and pleasure! What a change he had made in the childish monotony and quiet! She remembered how she had brought him to the house, how she had coaxed her father for him, how she had fluttered about him as he sat there beginning his drawing. If he said he wanted anything, how she flew to get it. How she watched every line over his shoulder; how she praised him with all simple sincerity. (Margaret still thought the picture beautiful, more beautiful than anything she had ever seen.) She seemed to see herself, oh, so over-eager, over-bold, unmaidenly! Was it wonderful that he should think her ready to do everything he asked her—ready to make any sacrifice, to separate herself from all belonging to her for his sake?

There is always a certain consolation, a certain power which upholds and supports, in the consciousness of suffering for something which is not one's own fault. To have been the victim of some wonderful combination of circumstances, to have been caught in some snare, which all your skill was not able to elude, that is far from

being the worst that can befall any one. But to see in your conduct the germ of all your sufferings, to perceive how you have yourself led lightly up, dancing and singing, to the precipice over which you are about to be pitched—this is the most appalling ordeal of all. Margaret grew hot all over, with a blush that tingled to her finger points, and seemed to scorch her from head to foot. Whose fault was it, all the self-betrayal that followed, the horrible bond that bound her soul, and which she did not even venture to think of; whose fault was it but her own?

"Margaret, dear Margaret, dearest Jean has sent me to ask, are you not coming down-stairs again? We all feel for you, darling—and oh, do you think it is nothing to us? Dear Jean puts great force upon herself, she has such a strong will, and commands it; but we all feel the same. Oh, what a beautiful picture it is! What a dear, dear old house! How it brings back our youth, and dearest, dearest papa!"

Miss Leslie put her nose to the picture as if she would have kissed it. She felt in the depths of her artless soul that this was her duty to old Sir Ludovic, of whom poor Grace had known little enough for twenty years before. The tear came quite easily, which she dried with her white handkerchief, pressing it to her eyes. Not for anything in the world would she have failed of this duty to her dearest papa. Jean thought chiefly of crape, and was content with that way of expressing her sentiments; but within the first year, within, indeed, the first six months, to mention her father without the tear he had a right to, would have been to Grace a cruel dereliction from natural duty. After a twelvemonth, when the family put off crape, it would no doubt cease to be necessary—though always, she felt, a right thing—to pay that tribute of tears.

Margaret stood by, and looked on with a dreary helplessness. She had no tears for her father, no room for him even in her overladen and guilty soul. And this she felt acutely, with a pang the more, feeling as if all love had died out of her heart, and nothing but darkness and confusion, and ingratitude and insensibility, was in her and about her. She took up the picture with a slight shudder, as she touched it, and put it away in the corner where hung the faded portrait of her mother's young lover.

This touch of contact with the story of one who had gone before her, whom somehow—she scarcely knew how—she could not help identifying with herself, gave her a little fanciful consolation. Margaret did not long, as so many girls have done, to have a mother to flee to, and in whom to confide all her troubles; but it seemed to her, in some confused way, that it must have been but a previous chapter in her own life, which had passed under this same roof, in this same house, twenty years ago. She seemed almost dimly to recollect it, as she recollected (but far more vividly) that time of folly in which she had "encouraged" and "led on" Rob Glen.

It was better for her to obey Jean's call, to go down-stairs and try to forget it all, for a moment, than to stay here and drive herself wild, wondering what he might do next, and what, oh what! it would be necessary for her to do. Grace, who was a little disappointed not to find her dissolved in tears, recommended that she

should bathe her eyes, and brought her some water, and took a great deal of pains to obliterate the traces of weeping which did not exist. She tucked Margaret's hand under her arm, and patted it and held it fast.

"My poor darling!" she said, cooing over the unresponsive girl. Jean, too, who was not given to much exhibition of feeling, received her, when she came back, with something like tenderness.

"Put a chair for Margaret by the fire, Aubrey," she said, "the child will be cold coming through all those passages; that is the worst of an old house, there are so many passages, and a draught in every one of them. I would not say a word against old houses, which are of course all the fashion, and very picturesque, and all that; but I must say I think you suffer from draughts. And what good is the fireplace in the hall? the heat all goes up that big chimney. It does not come into the house at all. I would like hot-water pipes, but they are a great expense, and of course you would all tell me they were out of keeping. So is gas out of keeping. Oh, you need not cry out; I don't mean in the drawing-room, of course, which is a thing only done in Scotland, and quite out of the question; but to wander about those passages in the dark, and never to stir a step without a candle in your hand! I think it a great trouble, I must allow."

"Your ancestral home, Miss Leslie," said Mr. St. John, who had secured a place in front of the fire, "must be a true mediæval monument. I am very much interested in domestic architecture. And so I am sure you must be, familiar with two such houses—"

"People who possess old houses seldom care for them," said Aubrey, taking up a position on the other side. "You know what my aunt says about gas and hot-water pipes. Tell me," he said, half whispering, stooping over her, to the great indignation of the clergyman, "what I must call you. I must reserve the endearing title of aunt for the family circle, but I can't say Miss Leslie, you know, for you are not Miss Leslie; and Margaret, *tout court*, would be a presumption."

"Everybody calls me Margaret," she said.

"That man did at Killin. I felt disposed to pitch him into the loch when I heard him; but probably," said Aubrey, laughing, "there might have been two words to that, don't you think? Perhaps, if it had come to a struggle, it would have been I who was most likely to taste the waters of the loch."

"Oh, Randal is very good-natured," said Margaret, making an effort to recover herself, "and perhaps he would not have known what you meant if you had spoken about a loch. I never saw this house till just a little while ago," she added to Mr. St. John, anxious to be civil. "I never was out of Fife."

"And the Northern architecture is different from ours; more rude, is it not? I have heard that people often get confused, and attach an earlier date to a building than it really has any right to."

"It is kind of you to say the man at Killin was good-natured," said Aubrey, on the other side; "of course, you think I would not have given him much trouble. It seemed to me that everybody showed an extraordinary amount of confidence in that man at Killin. He pretended

to be fishing, but he never fished. I suspect his fishing related to—who shall we say—your little cousin? Nay, I am making a mistake again; I always forget that you belong to the previous generation—your niece.”

“Effie!” cried Margaret, completely roused, so great was her surprise. “Oh! but it was always—it was never—Effie—” Here she made a pause, bewildered, and caught Mr. St. John’s eye. “Oh, I beg your pardon,” she cried, with a sudden blush; “I—don’t know about architecture. I have not had—very much education,” she answered, looking piteously at her sisters for aid.

“Oh, dearest Jean! I think I must really go and tell Mr. St. John—”

“Hold your tongue!” said Mrs. Bellingham, holding her sister fast by her dress; “let the child make it out for herself. Do you think they mind about her education? Who cares for education? Men always like a girl to know nothing. Just keep out of the way and stop meddling.”

This aside was inaudible to the group round the fire; though Mr. St. John’s admirable enunciation made all he said quite distinct to them, and Mrs. Bellingham’s sharp ears were very conscious of Aubrey’s whispering—which was ill-bred, but of no effect—on the other side of Margaret’s chair.

Mr. St. John gave a little laugh of respectful derision and flattery.

“In the present age of learned ladies it is quite a relief to hear such a statement,” he said, “though I should not like to trust in your want of education. But this country is very rich architecturally, and I should be delighted to offer my humble services as cicerone. I should like to convert you to the pure English Elizabethan—”

“It must have been Miss Effie,” said Aubrey; “who else? for Aunt Grace, though charming—And it stands to reason that a man who says he has gone to a certain place for fishing, yet never touches a rod, must have ulterior motives. And Aunt Jean is of opinion that these two would make a very pretty pair.”

Why Aubrey said this it would be hard to tell; whether from malice, as meaning to prick her into annoyance, or whether out of simple mischief, anyhow it roused Margaret.

“Oh, I do not know if Jean would care—I am sure you are—very kind,” she said, vacantly, to Mr. St. John; then more rapidly to the other hand: “I am almost sure you are mistaken. Neither Jean nor Effie knew Randal—that is, to call knowing; he was—quite a stranger. I don’t think he knew Effie at all.”

“These are just the most favorable circumstances for a flirtation,” said Aubrey; “but look, they are all on the alert, and Aunt Jean is making signs to me. It is evident they mean you to talk to *him*, not me. When he goes away, let us return to Miss Effie and the man at Killin.”

“Oh, I don’t want to talk about them!” cried Margaret—here at least there was nothing to make her shrink from Jean’s inspection; she said this quite out loud, so that all the company heard. Because she had one thing to conceal, was it not natural that she should take particular pains to show that there was nothing to conceal? She did not want any one to whisper to her.

And there was besides, there could be no doubt, a certain tone of pique and provoked annoyance in Margaret’s voice.

“I was saying,” said Mr. St. John, mildly, “that in our own church there is a great deal that is interesting; and if you would allow me to take you over it some day, you and Mrs. Bellingham or Miss Leslie, I should not despair of interesting you. Besides, there are so many of your ancestors commemorated there. I hope we may succeed in making your mother-country very interesting to you,” he said, lowering his tone. It was a great relief to the young clergyman when “that fellow” went away from the heiress’s side.

“Oh, I like it very well,” Margaret said.

“But I am very ambitious, Miss Leslie; very well is indifferent. I want you to like it more than that; I want you to love it, to prefer it to the other,” he said, with fervor in his voice. “And now I must say good-night.” He held out his hand bending toward her, and Margaret, looking up, caught his eye: she gave a little start, and shrank backward at the very moment of giving him her hand. Why should he look like that—like *him* whom she was so anxious to forget? She dropped his hand almost before she touched it, in the nervous tremor which came over her. Why should he look like Rob Glen? Was he in the conspiracy against her to make her remember? She could scarcely keep in a little cry which rose to her lips in her sudden pain. Poor Mr. St. John! anything farther from his mind than to make her think of any other snitor could not be. But Mrs. Bellingham, who was more clear-sighted, saw the look, and put an interpretation upon it of a different kind. When Mr. St. John had gone, attended to the door by Aubrey at his aunt’s earnest request, Mrs. Bellingham came and placed herself where Mr. St. John had been, in front of the fire.

“That man,” she said, solemnly, when he was gone, “is after Margaret too. Oh! you need not make such signs to me, Grace; I know perfectly well what I am saying. I never would speak about lovers to girls in an ordinary way; the monkeys find out all that for themselves quite fast enough—do you think there is anything that I could teach Effie on that point? But Margaret’s is a peculiar case: she ought to know how to distinguish those who are sincere—she ought to know that it is not entirely for herself that men make those eyes at her. Oh, I saw him very well; I perceived what he meant by it. You have a very nice fortune, my dear, and a very nice house, and you will have to pay the penalty like others. You will very soon know the signs as well as I do; and I can tell you that *that* man is after you too.”

“Dearest Jean!” said Grace, “he may be a little High-Church, more high than I approve, but he is a very nice young man. Whom could Margaret have better than a good, nice-looking, young clergyman? They are more domestic and more at home, and more with their wives—”

“Fiddle-faddling eternally in a drawing-room,” said Mrs. Bellingham; “always in a woman’s way wherever she turns. No, my dear, whoever you marry, Margaret, don’t marry a clergyman; a man like that always purring about the fireside would drive me mad in a month.”

"Is it St. John who is in question?" said Aubrey, coming back. "Was he provided for my amusement? or is he daily bread at the Grange already? I don't see how so pretty-behaved a person could drive any one mad; he is a great deal safer than your last *protégé*, the man at Killin."

"I don't mean to discuss such questions with you, Aubrey," said Mrs. Bellingham; "it is late, and I think if you will light our candles for us, we will say good-night. And I will go with you, Margaret, and look at that picture again; it was a very pretty picture. I must have it framed for you; there is a place in the wainscot parlor where it would hang very well. Who did you say sent it to you? or did you tell me? I did not know that there ever was anybody at Earl's-hall that could draw so well."

"Dear Jean," said Grace, thinking it a good opportunity to appear in Margaret's defence, "let her alone, let the poor child alone to-night; she is too tired for anything. Are you not too tired, darling Margaret? I am sure you want to go to bed."

"I hope I know better than to overture her," said Jean, with some offence; "there is no need for you to come, Grace. Where have you put the picture, Margaret? Why, you have put it with its face to the wall! Is that to save it from the dust, or because you don't like to see it? My dear, I don't want to be unkind, but this is really carrying things too far. You don't mean to say you have taken a dislike to Earl's-hall?"

"No," Margaret said, under her breath; though it seemed to her that to look at the picture again was more than she could bear.

"And it is a very pretty picture," said Jean, turning it round and sitting down on the sofa to look at it—"a very pretty picture! By-and-by you will be very glad to have it. And who was it you said did it? I never thought Randal Burnside was an artist. Perhaps he got one of the people to do it who are always at Sir Claude's. But, my dear, if that is so, I can't let you take a present from a young man like Randal Burnside."

"It was not Randal"—Margaret was eager to clear him: "he never sent me anything in a present; he would not think of me at all. It was—once when he came to make a picture of papa, which is beautiful—He was a young man from the farm."

"A young man from the farm!"

"Rob Glen," said Margaret, almost choked, yet forcing herself to speak. "Papa said he might do it. I did not know anything about it, but I suppose he must have finished it; and here it is." It seemed a simple statement enough, if she had not been so breathless, and changed color so continually, and looked so haggard about the eyes.

Mrs. Bellingham heard this account with a blank face.

"Rob Glen!" she said; "Rob Glen! where have I heard the name before? Was it the servants at Earl's-hall, or was it Ludovic, or—who was it? Papa said he might do it? Dear me! papa might have known better, Margaret, though I am sure I don't want to blame him. It will have to be paid for, I suppose; and how very strange it should have been sent like this, with-

out a word! He will send a bill, most likely. How strange I should not have heard anything about this artist! Was there any price mentioned that you remember, Margaret? They ask such sums of money for one of those trifling sketches. It is nice enough, but I am sure it is not worth the half of what we shall have to give for it. When there is no bargain made beforehand, it is astonishing the charges they will make; and papa really had no money for such nonsense: he ought not to have ordered it; but perhaps he thought it would be a gratification to you. Can you remember at all, Margaret, if anything was said about the price?"

"Oh no, no—there was to be no price. It was not like that. He asked to do it, and papa let him do it. Nobody thought of any money."

"But, my dear!" said Jean—"my dear! you are a little simpleton; but you could not think, I hope, of taking the man's work and giving him *nothing* for it? That is out of the question—quite out of the question. I never heard of such a thing," said Mrs. Bellingham. The words seemed to penetrate through all Margaret's being. She trembled, notwithstanding all her efforts to control herself. What could she reply? Take a man's work and give him *nothing* for it; but it was not money that Rob would take.

"Of course it could not be expected that you should know anything of business," said Jean, "and poor papa was already feeling ill, perhaps, and out of his ordinary way. I dare say a letter will come by the next post to explain it. And if not, you must give me the young man's address, and I will write and ask, or we might send word to Ludovic. Aubrey is a very good judge of such things; we can ask Aubrey to-morrow what he thinks the value should be. Now, Margaret, you are trembling from head to foot—you are as white as a sheet; you have a nervous look about your eyes that it always frightens me to see. My dear, what is to become of you," cried Jean, "if you let every little thing upset you? It was in the course of nature that we should lose papa—he was an old man; and, I believe, though he was never a man who talked much about religion, that he was well prepared. And as for Earl's-hall, you would not grudge that to Ludovic? It is his right as the only son. It shows great weakness, my dear, both of body and mind, that you should be upset like this only by a picture of Earl's-hall."

Margaret listened with all that struggle of conflicting feelings which produces hysteria in people unused to control themselves. The choking in the throat, the burning of those unshed tears about her eyes, the trouble in her heart, was more than she could bear. She could not make any reply. She could not even see her sister's face; the room reeled round with her; everything grew dark. To save her balance, she threw herself suddenly upon the firm figure before her, clutching at Jean's support, throwing her arms round her with a movement of desperation. Few people had ever clung wildly to Mrs. Bellingham in moments of insufferable emotion. She was quite overcome by this involuntary appeal to her. She took her young sister into her arms, all unconscious of the cause of her misery, and caressed and soothed her, and stayed by her till she had calmed down, and was able to es-

cape from her trouble in bed. Jean believed in bed as a cure for most evils.

"You must not give way," she said—"indeed, my dear, you must not give way; but a good night's sleep will be the best thing for you; lie still and rest."

"What a tender-hearted thing it is!" she said, going down-stairs again for a last word with Aubrey, after this agitating task was over. "I declare she has quite upset me, too; though it is scarcely possible, after being so long away from home, that I could feel as she does. She is a great deal too feeling for her own comfort. But, Aubrey, you must not lose your time, my dear boy; you must push on. It would be the greatest 'divert' to her, as they say in Scotland, if you could only get her to fall in love with you. I have the greatest confidence in falling in love."

"And so have I—when they will do it," said Aubrey, puffing out a long plume of smoke from his cigar.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CURIOUSLY enough, Margaret's first thought, when she woke in the morning, was not of the picture nor of all the consequences which it seemed to threaten. Sometimes the most trifling matter will thrust itself in, before those giant cares, which generally wait by our bed-sides, to surprise us when we first open our eyes. And the first thing she thought of, strangely enough, was Aubrey's suggestion of last night—Effie! What could he mean by it? Effie had been his own companion, not Randal's. Randal had not walked or talked with, or sought any one, except— It was very strange, indeed, how any one could suppose that Effie— He did not *know* her. Of all the party, the one he knew best was certainly herself. She must certainly be best aware of what his feelings were—of what he had been thinking about! It annoyed her to think that Aubrey should have so little perception, should know so little about it, though Jean had such confidence in him. There was a little irritation in her mind about this point, which quite pushed to the front and made itself appear more important than it was. She could not help making a little survey of the circumstances, of all that had happened—and it had just occurred to her to recollect the offer of service and help that Randal had made her. This had made her half smile at the moment, and since then she had smiled more than once at the idea that she could want his help. She had said, "Jean will manage everything;" and yet he had said it with fervid meaning, with a look of anxious concern.

Ah! she sprang up in her bed, and clasped her hands together. The occasion had come; but she could not consult Randal, nor any one. She must struggle through it by herself, as best she could, holding her peace, saying nothing. That was the only safety for her. But Margaret was surprised to find that when she turned the picture round again, and looked at it trembling, as though it had been capable of doing her bodily harm, she did not feel so much power in it as she had done the day before. It did not sting her the second time. She looked at it almost tranquilly, seeing in it no dreadful accuser, bringing before her all her own past levity and

folly, but only a memorial of a time and a place which indeed made her heart beat with keen emotion and with pain, but not with the overwhelming, sickening passion of misery which had been like death to her last night.

She could not understand how this was, for the circumstances had not changed in any way; and there was still evidently before her the difficulty of making Jean understand how it was that this picture could be accepted without payment, and keeping her, energetic as she was, from interfering in her own person. There was still this difficulty; and all that made the future so alarming, the dread of other surprises that might follow this, was undiminished; but yet, instead of turning the picture to the wall again, in sick horror of it and fear of it as of a ghost, Margaret left it in the recess, uncovered, the corner of the broad rim of white touching the little faded water-color portrait. That touch gave her a certain soothing and consolation. It was not the same kind of trouble as her own; probably the other girl who had been engaged to that poor fellow without loving him had not been at all to blame; but yet there his portrait stood, a memorial of other uneasy thoughts that had gone on in this same chamber. Probably *she* blamed herself too, though not as Margaret was doing. But certainly, anyhow, she must have sat thinking, and cried in the same corner of that sofa, and looked at the pale painted face. Margaret leaned the cause of her trouble against the frame of that dead and gone one, which the other girl had lived through, and felt that there was consolation in the tomb. What so visionary, so painful, so foolish even, that will not console at eighteen when it happens to offer a parallel to our own distresses?

And it was with renewed courage and a great deal more composure than she could have hoped for, that Margaret went down-stairs. They all came to meet her with kindly questions how she was. "But I, for one, think it quite unnecessary to put any such question," said Aubrey. He looked at her with a lingering look of pleasure. He did not object to Margaret. She was not "his style;" but still he did not object to her, and this morning he admired her, as she came down-stairs in her morning freshness, her black dress bringing out the delicate tints of her complexion. Jean had told him that he had better lose no time; and the fact of Mr. St. John's evident intentions had quickened Aubrey's. The good which another man was trying to secure became more valuable in his eyes. She was certainly very pretty, he said to himself, a delicate little creature, like a pale rose—not altogether a white rose, but that delicate blush which is not definable by any vulgar name of color; and her silky hair was piquant among all the frizzy unkempt heads that were more fashionable. On the whole, he had not the least objection to make what "running" he could for Margaret. She was worth winning, with her beautiful old house, and her pretty little income, though she was not quite his style.

"Here is a fat letter for you," he said; "we have all been grumbling over our letters. Aunt Jean, I think, would like to read them all, to see if they were fit to be delivered to us; she takes all the charge of our moral as well as of our physical well-being. I saw her look at this

very narrowly, as if she had the greatest mind to break the seal. *That* is of course a figure of speech nowadays. I mean to open the envelope; it is very fat and tempting to the curious spectator. I should like myself to know what was in it; it must be from some dear confidential young lady friend."

Margaret looked at the letter with a little thrill of alarm. She did not get many letters, and every one that came was a slight excitement; but when she had looked at it she laid it down very calmly. "It is from Bell," she said. She knew very well what Bell would say to her. She would tell her about the brown cow and the chickens, and how John was with his rheumatism; and there was no great hurry to read it for a few minutes, until they had ceased to take so much notice of her. Margaret knew that after a minute or two her sisters would be fully occupied with their own concerns.

"Aubrey is talking nonsense, Margaret, as he generally does," said Mrs. Bellingham. "The idea that I would open anybody's letter! not but what I think it a very right thing of young people to show their letters to their parents, or to those who stand in the place of parents; it shows a right sort of confidence, and I confess, for my part, I always like to see it; but I am not the sort of person that would ever force confidence. It is nothing, I always say, unless it comes spontaneously. I wonder if Bell will tell you anything about that picture that arrived last night, Margaret! I saw your letter was from Bell, and that is what made me look at it, as Aubrey says, though he always exaggerates. Of course, I knew Bell and you had no secrets, Margaret. I really think if you had been out of the way I should have done violence to my own feelings and gone the length of opening it, just to see if there was anything to explain what that young man could mean by sending it without a word."

"Oh!" said Aubrey, "it was a young man, then, was it, who made the drawing? it is satisfactory to know that it was a young man."

"Why is it satisfactory to know that he is a young man? I can't say that I see that at all; it is neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory: it is not a person in our condition of life, so that it does not matter in the least to Margaret. Why do you say it is satisfactory to know that he is a young man?"

"Well, because then there is hope that he will do better when he is older," said Aubrey. "You all seemed to like it so much that I did not venture to say anything; but it is not great in point of art. I have no doubt it is a most faithful representation of the place, but it is nothing to speak of, you know, in the point of art."

"Oh, really, do you think so?" cried Mrs. Bellingham; "then you would not think it worth a very high price, Aubrey? I am very glad of that—for I thought we might be obliged to offer a large sum—"

"It is a beautiful picture," said Margaret, hotly; she could not bear anything to be said against this rooted belief of hers: its presence alarmed and troubled her, but she would not have it undervalued. "If it were to be sold it would be worth a great deal of money—it is a beautiful picture; but there is nothing about

selling it," she cried, a flush rising into her cheeks. "It was done for—papa: money would not buy it—and him that painted it was not thinking about money." Her pronouns, poor child, were wrong, but her heart was right. Rob Glen was her greatest terror on earth, but she would be just to him all the same.

"But that is just what I cannot be satisfied about," said Jean. "If you pay a man for his work, why there you are! but if you don't pay him, or give him anything as an equivalent, why where are you? Every man must be paid one way or another. Open Bell's letter, Margaret, and tell me if she says anything about it. I shall have to write to Ludovic, or to the young man himself, if we do not know what he means."

Margaret opened Bell's letter with a hand that trembled a little. She did not expect to find anything there on the subject which had so deeply occupied her; but still, to open this thick enclosure before Jean, whose mind was so much set upon it that something was to be found there, and who would watch her while she read it, and ask to see Bell's humble epistle, was very alarming. She opened it with a tremulousness which she could scarcely disguise. Bell had folded her letter, which was written on a large sheet of paper, in the way in which letters had been folded before the days of envelopes, and consequently it was with some little delay and difficulty that a trembling hand opened the big folds. But Margaret was suddenly petrified, frozen to her very heart with terror, when she saw another letter lying enclosed—a tiny letter of a very different aspect from Bell's. She dared not move—she dared not do anything to show the greatness of the shock she had received. The danger was not of a kind that she dared disclose. The paper shook in her hands convulsively, and then they became preternaturally still and steady. She did not know Rob Glen's handwriting, but she knew that this was from him by instinct, by inspiration of her terror. What was she to do? Her face she felt grow crimson, then fell into a chill of paleness; and when she lifted her eyes in a momentary glance of panic to see if Jean was looking at her, she met the eyes of Aubrey, and without knowing what she did, in a kind of delirium made a terrified, instantaneous appeal to him. Her thoughts were too hurried, her desperation too complete even to make her conscious that the appeal was unreasonable, or, indeed, aware that she had made it, till the thing was done; and next moment all became dim before her eyes, though she still kept her balance desperately upon her seat, and held the papers firmly in her hands.

Aubrey was not insensible or unkind: he was startled by the look; for whatever Margaret's emotion might mean it was evidently something very real and terrible for the young, inexperienced creature who put this involuntary trust in him. He said instantly:

"Have you finished breakfast, Aunt Jean?—for if so, I want you to look at some things of mine—a parcel I received this morning. Christmas is coming, and with all that crew of children at the Court, a man is put to his wit's end: come into my room and give me your advice about them. Oh yes, of course they are

rubbish; what can I buy but rubbish on my little scrap of money? But come and give me your opinion."

"Wait a minute, my dear boy, wait a minute; you shall have my opinion with the greatest of pleasure; but I want to hear what Bell says."

Upon this he got up, and walking solemnly to her, offered his arm. "Who is Bell? I decline to yield the *pas* to Bell. Come now with me, and Bell will do afterward; if it takes so long to read as it promises from the size of it, I should have to wait till to-morrow, and that does not suit me at all. Whisper! there is a scrap of *Sèvres*, *Rose du Barri*, and one or two small rags of lace."

"Oh!" Mrs. Bellingham uttered a cry. She made a little dart toward Margaret to inspect the letter over her shoulder, thus hoping to secure both the advantages offered; but before she could carry out her intention, her hand was caught fast in Aubrey's arm. "I want *you* to see them all *first*," he whispered in her ear.

"I do think dear Aubrey might have asked me too," said Miss Grace, querulously; "I don't know that there is so much difference, though it is Jean, to be sure, who is his real aunt. But then, perhaps, dearest Margaret, you know, he might not like to ask me, an unmarried lady, to go into his room. Yes, yes, dear Aubrey, I see exactly what he meant—he gave me a look as he went away, as much as to say, I will explain it all afterward. Naturally, you know, he would not ask me, being an unmarried lady, to go into his room. Where are you going, my dear—where are you going? You have not eaten anything, darling Margaret; you have not even taken your tea."

But it was not difficult to escape from Grace; and Margaret, with a sense of desperation, snatched a cloak from the hall and stole out, wending her way among the shrubbery to the most retired spot she could think of. She would not go to her room, where her sister would inevitably come after her. She had thrust Bell's big letter—innocent production, penned out of the fulness of Bell's heart, which was as big as the letter—into her pocket. And she dared not look at the other till she had got safe into some corner where nobody would see her, some covert where she would be free from inspection. The cold wind revived her, and a little spiteful rain came damp upon her face, bringing back a little of its color; but she was unconscious of both wind and rain. She went to a little breezy summer-house in a corner of the grounds; and then she bethought herself that the gravel-paths were dry there, and Jean might easily follow; so she retraced her steps hurriedly, and pulled the hood of her cloak over her head, and ran across the little bridge over the stream, to the park, where all the ground was still thickly sprinkled with the autumn carpet of yellow leaves. The grass was wet, the rain came spitefully in her face, but she did not mind. When she was in the midst of the big clump of elms, where the leaves were almost gone, she stopped and paused a moment to rest, with her back against a tree. Jean would never follow her there; the wet grass and universal dampness spreading round her made her safe. She opened her fingers in which she had held it fast, the innocent-looking little missive. With

what a beating heart she opened it! Oh, how foolish, foolish she had been to bind all her life, for ever and ever, and she not eighteen! And here it was that she read her first love-letter—her heart beating, but not with pleasure; her bosom heaving with terror, and dismay, and pain.

"Margaret, my own darling, where have you gone from me? Why do you not send me a word in charity? It is three months since you went away! Is it possible that in all that time you have never thought of me, nor thought how miserable I was, deprived of you and of all knowledge of you? You have put my love to a tremendous test, though it is strong enough to bear that, and a great deal more. But oh, my love, don't make me so unhappy! Shake me off, you cannot; make me forget, you cannot. My love is too tender and too constant to fail; but you can make me very wretched, Margaret, and that is what you are doing. I have waited and waited, and looked every day for a letter—the merest little scrap would have made me happy. I knew you could not write often or much; but one word, surely I might have had one word. I am just finishing the drawing you liked, the view of Earl's-hall, hoping that, notwithstanding all changes, you may like it still, and that it may remind you of the happy time when we first knew each other, when nobody thought of parting us. Your dear old father would never have parted us; he would have preferred your happiness to everything. He would rather have chosen a loving husband to take care of his little Peggy, than all the world could give her. Your brother thinks otherwise, my darling, and I don't blame him; but I know what old Sir Ludovic would have thought. And you will not let them turn you against me, my sweetest Margaret? you will not give me up because I am poor? That is a thing I would scarcely believe, if you said it with your own dear lips. Margaret Leslie give up her betrothed husband because he had nothing! I never would believe it. But I know your delicate sense of honor, my own dear girl. You do not like to write to me in secret for the sake of the people you are living among. I understand how you feel, and you are right—I know you are right; but, my sweet love, remember that to please them you are killing me, and I don't feel that I can bear it much longer. The silence is becoming too much; it is making an end of me. One word—one sweet loving word, my own Margaret, just to keep me alive! I feel that I am getting desperate. If I do not have one word from you I cannot answer for myself, even if it be for my own destruction: if I do not hear of you, I must come and see you. I must get sight of you. Three months without a word—without a message, is enough to kill any one who loves as I do. I say to myself, she cannot have forgotten me, she cannot have forsaken me. she is too true, too faithful to her word; and then another day comes, and I get desperate. Half a dozen times I have been ready to start off to go after you, to watch about your house, only to get a glimpse of you. Write to me, my Margaret, put me out of my misery—only one word—!"

Then, in a postscript, it was added that he had asked Bell to send this for once, in order that her friends, her unkind friends, who wanted to

separate her from him, might not find out he had written, and that he had sent the drawing—and that once more he begged for one word, only one word in reply. It was written under two dates, one some weeks before the other. Margaret stood with her back against the elm-tree, and read it with a flutter of terror. Oh, what would she do if he were to carry out his threat, if he were to come and watch about the house, and look for her! Was that a thing that might happen any time, when she was walking through the lanes, even here in her own little park under her elm-trees? Might he come at any moment and do as he used to do at Earl's-hall? Oh! Margaret started from her shelter and clinched her hands, and stamped her foot on the wet, yielding grass! Oh! should it ever have to be gone through again, all that it made her blush so hotly to think of? The blush that was usually so evanescent got fixed in hot crimson of excitement on her cheek. If he came, it seemed to her that it was she who must fly—anywhere—to the end of the world: but yet he had a right to come, and some time he would come, and she would not be able to say a word against it. "Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?" cried Margaret to herself. Would he not let her even have her three years to herself? He might wait, surely he might wait for three years!

But it would be impossible to give any idea of the confused muddle of pain and helpless, instinctive resistance in her thoughts. A hot flush of resentment against him for daring to use the name her father had ever called her by—a kind of speechless fury and indignation, burst out in the midst of all her other excitements. How dared he do it, Rob Glen, who was nobody, who was not even a gentleman? And then she covered her face with her hands, and cried out with horror and bewilderment to think that this was her opinion of one to whom she had pledged herself, to whom she would belong almost more than to her father himself. And she had no one to go to, no one she could confide in, no one whose help she could ask. And what help would avail her? She must keep her word, she must fulfil her promise—at the end of three years.

She never even contemplated the possibility of breaking her word; but at present why could he not let her alone? Had she not begged him to let her alone? She sank down by the foot of the elm, not even noting the wet, and cried. Crying could do no good, she knew that; but yet it relieved her mind. She was hemmed in and encompassed with danger. Perhaps he might come, might appear suddenly in her path, with arms ready to take hold of her, with those caresses which made her shrink, even in imagination, with shame and pain. There had never been a time—except the first moment when she was too broken-hearted, too miserable to care what happened to her—that she had not shrunk from his tenderness. And how could she bear it now? Terror came upon her breathless and speechless; here even, under these very trees, he might appear suddenly. A stifled shriek came out of her oppressed heart at the thought. It seemed to her that she could never move anywhere with safety, without a sense of terror again.

And then there were lesser but very apparent dangers. Jean would ask her what Bell had said; she would ask, perhaps, to see Bell's let-

ter, in which there was a sentence which was as bad as telling all. Bell wrote: "I am sending to you, my dear Miss Margret, a note that Rob Glen—him that you had to come so much to Earl's-hall before my dear old maister died—has asked me to send. Lothe, lothe was I to do it! It may be something misbecoming the like of you to receive. But I will send it this one time. For a young lady like you to be writing of letters with a young gentleman of her own kind is a thing I would not encourage; but Rob Glen is more a match for your maid, Miss Margret, than he is for you. And it's real impudent of him to ask me; but as he says it's something about one of his pictures, I do it for this one time." If Jean asked to see Bell's letter, would not this betray her? So that her path was surrounded by perils both great and small. After a while, weary, wet, and dragged, with her dress clinging to her, and her cloak dripping, she returned across the sodden grass. Jean, she knew, would be busy for the moment with household cares, and it seemed to Margaret that, if she lost no time, she might still make an attempt to avert the fate that threatened. She went to her own room, holding up as best she could her poor black dress with its spoiled crape, and, still crimson and hot with her excitement, wrote two letters in the time which she ordinarily took to arrange the preliminaries of one. She wrote to Rob as follows, with a terseness of expression partly dictated by the terror of him that had taken possession of her mind, partly by the headstrong haste in which she wrote.

"DEAR ROB,—I could not write, and I cannot now, because I promised to Ludovic. You must not come; oh, don't come, if you have any pity for me! My life would be made miserable. How is it possible I could forget you? You don't forget anything in such a short time—and how could I *ever* forget? Oh, it has cost me too much! Please, please do not come. I am quite well, and you must not—indeed you must not—mind my not writing, for I promised Ludovic. Good-bye, dear Rob; I do not want to hurt you. I always knew that you were very kind; but you must not—indeed, indeed, you must not—think of coming to me here."

Her wet dress, her spoiled crape, clung about her limbs; her wet shoes were like two pools, in which her cold little feet were soaked. As is usual at such moments of excitement, her head was burning but her feet cold. Nevertheless, she wrote another little note to Bell, telling her that she was quite right not to send any letters, and begging that if she saw Mr. Randal Burnside she would ask him to speak to Mr. Glen. Bell was to say that Margaret had told her to make this extraordinary request—and Mr. Randal Burnside would understand. Nothing could be more incoherent than this last letter, for Margaret did not half know what she meant Randal to do or say; but he had promised to help her; he had told her to call him whenever she wanted him. Was her poor little head getting feverish and light? She went out again, stealing, in her wet garments, once more down-stairs, leaving a dimness upon the polished wood, and walked all the way through the gradually increasing rain to the post-office in the village, where she put in

her two letters. She was aching all over, her head hot and light, her feet cold and heavy, her crape all soaked and ruined, her hands too feeble to hold up her dress, which clung about her ankles, and made her stumble at every step, before she got home.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE time that had passed so peacefully over Margaret, bringing so many new experiences, new scenes, and enlarged acquaintance with her own circumstances and advantages, had not gone with equal satisfaction over Rob Glen. Margaret's pledge to him—that pledge which she had given so easily, and which his mother prized so deeply—had been nothing but painful and shameful to him. Conscience has curious varieties in different persons, even in persons so nearly related as mother and son. Rob felt no sting in his moral consciousness from the fact that he had led Margaret to commit herself in her moment of trouble, and had taken advantage of the very abandonment of her grief to assume the position of a lover, the mere fact of which gave him a hold over her which nothing else could have given. To do him justice, he would have taken the same position with any comely poor girl whom he had encountered in equal distress; but the poor lass would probably have thought little of it, whereas to Margaret's more delicate nature there was all the reality of an unbreakable bond in the embrace and kiss with which he had taken possession of her, before she was aware. But Rob felt no trouble in his conscience in this respect. It did not occur to him that he had surprised her, and taken advantage of her sorrow and loneliness and bewilderment; but in respect to the pledge which his mother had with so little trouble got from her, his conscience did speak. Margaret, it was true, had thought nothing of it; she had felt that all was done already, that her fate was fixed and irrevocable, that she could not go back—and what did her name on a piece of paper signify? But here was where Rob's honor, such as it was, came in; he hated that piece of paper. He was deeply mortified by Margaret's readiness to consent to everything so long as she could get free from his mother and himself. The written bond seemed to put him in a false position, to lessen him in his own eyes. He would have nothing to say to it.

"Keep it yourself, if you like it, now that you have got it—it is none of my doing," he had said, throwing it from him. Mrs. Glen secured it with a cry of dismay, as it was fluttering toward the fire.

"Ay, I'll keep it," she said; "and ye'll be fain some day to come questing to me for your bit o' paper, as ye call it, that you never would have had if your mother had been as thoughtless as yourself."

"Mother!" he said, furious, "do you think I would hold a girl to her written promise, if she did not want to keep her word?"

"I canna say what you would do," said Mrs. Glen; "you're just a great gomerel, that's what you are. Ye have mair confidence in her being in love with ye, a lang leggit ne'er-do-weel, than in onything that's reasonable: but, Robbie, my

man, love comes and love goes. You're no bad-looking, and you have the gift of the gab, which goes a lang way—and maybe she'll stick to ye, as you think, against a' her friends can say; but for me, I've aye a great confidence in what's put down in black and white, and I wouldna say but you would be fain to come to me for my bit o' paper, for a' so muckle as you despise it now."

"Never will I build my faith on such a foundation—never will I hold Margaret to her bond!" cried Rob; but his mother locked the precious bit of paper in the old secretary which stood in the parlor, with a cynical disregard to his protestations.

"It's there in the left-hand drawer, if anything should happen to me; if you should ever want it, you'll ken where to find it," she said.

And several weeks went on without any impatience on the part of either in respect to Margaret; even the conversation which Rob had with the new Sir Ludovic, who summoned him curtly to give up all idea of his sister, had rather encouraged than depressed him; for it was evident that Margaret had showed no signs of yielding, and her brother was not even her guardian, and had no power whatever over her. When he thus ascertained from Sir Ludovic's inadvertent admission that Margaret had remained steadfast, Rob had metaphorically snapped his fingers at the Baronet. He had been perfectly civil, but he had given Sir Ludovic to understand that he cared little enough for his disapprobation. "If I was in your position I should no doubt feel the same," he had said with fierce candor; "I should think that Margaret was about to throw herself away; but she does not think so, which is the great matter."

"She will think so when she comes to her senses—when she is fit to form an opinion," Sir Ludovic cried; and Rob had smilingly assured him that he was contented to wait and put this to the proof. But after that interview, when Earl's-hall was dismantled and left vacant, and everything belonging to the Leslies seemed about to disappear, and not a word came out of the distance in which Margaret was, both Rob and his mother began to be uneasy. Rob had not calculated upon any correspondence; but yet he had felt that somehow or other she would manage to communicate with him, and to find some means by which he could communicate with her. Girls of Margaret's condition do not submit to entire separation as those of Jeanie's do; and when day after day passed, and week after week, it was natural that he should become uneasy. Nor was the anxiety which he felt as a lover unshared by the cooler spectator. Mrs. Glen began to ply him with questions, anxious, fretful, scornful, derisive.

"Ony word to-day, Rob?" she would say; "I saw you gang out to meet the lassie with the post." "Dear, dear, Rob, I hope our bonnie young lady may be well!" would be the burden of the next inquiry—and then came sharper utterances: "Lord! if I was a lad like you, I wouldna stick there waiting and waiting, but I would ken the reason." "Do you think that's the way to court a lass, even if she be a lady? I would give her no peace if it were me; I would let her see that I wasna the one to play fast and loose with." These repeated assaults were followed by practical consequences quite as dis-

agreeable. Instead of the indulgence with which he had been for some time treated, the tacit consent given to his do-nothingness, the patience of his mother, though it went sorely against the grain, with an existence which produced no profit and was of no use—he began to be once more the object of those bitter criticisms and flying insults which she knew so well how to make use of, to the exasperation of the compelled listener. “What it is to be a man and a good scholar!” she would say. “I couldna sit hand-idle, looking at other folk working—no! if it were to save my life. Eh, ay, there’s a wonderful difference atween them that are born to earn their living, and them that are content to live on their friends. I hope the time will never come when that will be my lot. But no one of a’ my friends would help me, that’s one thing, certain, though there are some that have ave the luck to get somebody to toil and moil, while they live pleasantly and gang lightly. It is the way of the world.”

Another time she would burst out with all the fervor of roused temper. “Lord, man, how can ye sit there and see every creature in the house working but yourself? I would sooner weed the turnips or frichten the craws—but you’re of less use than a bairn of three years auld.”

Rob steeled himself as best he could against these blighting words. He would stroll forth whistling by way of defiance and be absent the whole day, absent at meal-times when his mother exacted punctuality, and late of returning at night. It was a struggle of constant exasperation between them. He had no money and no means of getting any, or he would gladly have left the farm, where there was no longer even anything to amuse him, anything to give him the semblance of a pursuit. To be sure, he worked languidly at his drawings still, and resumed the interrupted sketch of Earl’s hall which had occupied so important a place in his recent history.

To have before you the hope of being rich in three years, of being able to enter another sphere and cast away from you all those vulgar necessities of work which fill the lives of most people—to have ease before you, happiness, social elevation, but only on the other side of that long chasm of time, which for the moment you can see no way of getting through—it is impossible to imagine a more tantalizing position. Say that it is utterly mean and miserable of any man to fix his entire hopes upon an elevation procured in such a way; but Rob was not conscious of this. A rich wife, who was also pretty and young, seemed to him a most satisfactory way of making a fortune. Had she been old and ugly the case would have been different; but he had no more hesitation about enriching himself by means of Margaret, than he had felt in securing Margaret to himself in the incaution and prostration of her grief. His conscience and his honor had in these particulars nothing to say. But as day after day went on and he received nothing from Margaret to prove his power over her, no stolen letter, no secret assurance of her love and faithfulness, Rob’s mind became more and more uneasy, and his thoughts more and more anxious. She was the sheet-anchor of his safety, without which he must return into a chaos all the more dark that it had been irradiated by such a hope.

And this suspense, while it made his position at home more and more uncomfortable every day, did not improve his mental condition, as may be easily supposed. He had entertained plans, before he had perceived how easily he might step upward by aid of Margaret’s hand, of seeking his fortune in London, and either by means of pen or pencil, or both together, making out some kind of future for himself. But why should he take this trouble, and expose himself to the rich man’s contumely, etc., when, by-and-by, he might himself appear among the best (as his ignorant fancy suggested), a patron of art instead of a feeble professor of it—a fine amateur, with all the condescension toward artists which it is in the power of the wealthy to show? This was an ignoble thought, and he was partially conscious that it was so; but there was a latent love of indolence in him which is always fostered by such prospects of undeserved and unearned aggrandizement as now flaunted before his eyes. Why should he work laboriously to gain a little advancement for himself, when by mere patience and waiting he might reach to such advancement as the most Herculean work of his could not bring him to? And the suspense in which he was worked upon his mind and led him on in this evil path. He could do nothing till he had heard from her; and she would write, she must write, any day.

These motives altogether, and the want of money to do anything for himself, and even the reproaches of his mother, who denounced him for eating the bread of idleness without affording him any means to attempt a better existence—which latter acted by hardening his heart and making him feel a defiant satisfaction in thwarting her—all drove him deeper and deeper into the slipshod habits of an unoccupied life. He got up late, happy to escape a *tête-à-tête* breakfast with his mother, and her sneers and reproaches, at the cost of Jenny’s integrity, who smuggled him in a much better breakfast than his mother’s while the mistress was busy about her dairy or in her poultry-yard; he dawdled over his sketches, doing a little dilettante work as pleased him; then he would stroll out and perhaps walk across the country to some other farm-house, where he was sure of a hospitable invitation to share the family dinner, and an excellent reception from the mother and daughters, to whom it was no trouble to make himself agreeable; or he would go to the Manse, and resume the often interrupted discussion about his “difficulties” with Dr. Barnside, who was anxious to be “of use” to Rob, and to be instrumental, as he said, in bringing him back to the right way.

These discussions amused both parties greatly—the Minister, as affording him a means of bringing forth from their ancient armory those polemical weapons in which every man who has ever attempted to wield them, takes a secret pride—and the young sceptic, by reason of the delightful sense of superiority with which he felt able to see through his adversary’s weakness, and sense of power in being able to crush him when he wished to do so. Often these controversies, too, which were continually renewed and never-ending, got Rob a dinner, and saved him from the domestic horrors of the farm. And by-and-by there happened another accident which

threw him still more into the way of mischief, as happens so often to those who dally with temptation. He had made his peace with Jeanie on that melancholy night after Margaret's departure. She had been angry; but she had been persuaded to hear his story—to understand him, to see how it was that he had been "drawn into" the present circumstances of his life—and finally to be sorry for him who had gone astray because unaware that she was near, and because of poor little Margaret's need of comfort and solace.

Did not Jeanie know how he could console a poor girl in trouble with that tongue of his, that would wile a bird from a tree? She had forgiven him, and they had parted in melancholy kindness, recognizing that fate, not any fault of theirs, had separated them. When the household at Earl's-hall was broken up, Jeanie had returned to her father; and not long after she had, as was most natural, encountered Rob in a lonely lane, where she was taking a melancholy evening walk. What could be more natural? She could not sit and talk with the wives at their doors, when the soft autumn twilight, so full of wistful suggestion, dropped softly over the "laigh town." Jeanie was too much in the midst of her own life, too much absorbed by the dramatic uncertainties of fate, to be capable of that tranquil amusement. There were not many people in the Kirkton who cared for the exercise of a walk. The men might stray out a hundred yards beyond the village, on one side or the other, with their evening pipe, but the women kept at "the doors;" they had enough of exercise in the care of their families and in "redding up the hoose."

Thus Jeanie, even if she had wanted a companion, would have been unlikely to find one; and indeed it was much more to her mind to stray forth alone, very melancholy, with her head full of Rob, and all her old anger and indignation softened into indulgence and pity. He was made like that, could he help it? He could not see trouble anywhere without doing what he could to console the sufferer. Jeanie knew this well—and how tender a comforter he was. And poor Miss Margaret was so young and so bonnie, and in such sore trouble; and oh, it was easy to see, Jeanie thought to herself, how soft her heart was to *him*! No wonder; he would wile a bird from the tree. They met while she was in this softened mood; and Rob was one who never neglected the good the gods provided of this sort. He in his turn had recourse to Jeanie for consolation, throwing himself upon that feminine mercy and sympathy which never had yet failed him. And Jeanie cried, and was dismally flattered by his confidence in the midst of her suffering, and told him all she had heard from Bell about Margaret's movements, and forgot herself, poor girl, in the intensity of fellow-feeling and understanding.

Next time they met it was not by accident; and Rob, while growing more and more anxious about the new love, which meant more than happiness to him, which meant likewise fortune and an altogether elevated and loftier life, took the comfort of the old love which was thus thrown in his way, and found life much more tolerable from the fact that he could talk over his distresses with Jeanie. He could confide to her his

mother's taunts, and the hardness of his life at home, till Jeanie almost felt that to see him married to Margaret would be an advantage to herself, though she cried over it bitterly enough when she was alone. But what did *she* matter, after all, a poor lass? Jeanie thought she could put up with anything to see him happy.

"A bonnie end your drawing and your painting and a' your idleness is coming to," said Mrs. Glen, one November morning, while Rob obscured all the light in the little parlor window, putting the last touches to that drawing of Earl's-hall. "A bonnie way of spending your life. Eh, man! I would sooner sweep the house, or clean the rooms! What is the good o' a' this fying and splairing? and what is to be the end of your bonnie miss that a' this idle work was to win? I'll warrant she thinks she's gotten clear off, and got a' she wanted, and no need to do a hand's turn for you, in recompense of a' that you have thrown away upon her."

"You have a very poor opinion of Margaret," he said, "if you think so little of her. You can scarcely want her for a daughter-in-law."

"Me!" said Mrs. Glen; "am I wanting her? I hope I have mair sense than to put my trust in daughters-in-law. 'A gude green turf's a fine gude mither,' that's a' the most of them are thinking. Na! she might gang to—Jerusalem for me, if it wasna that her siller is the only way I can think of to get you bread, ye weirdless lad. When you have no mother to keep a roof over your head, what is to become of you? The Lord be thanked there's no a weirdless one in my family but yourself! Do I want the lass or her siller—no me! But I'm real glad I've got *yon* bond over her, for you and no for me."

He frowned as he always did at the mention of this. "I am going to pack up this drawing and send it to Miss Leslie," he said.

"The picter! in a present!" Mrs. Glen stood for a moment taken by surprise, and a little bewildered by the suddenness of the suggestion. "I'm no that sure but what it's a good notion," she said, slowly; "them that dinna ken might say it was throwing good money after bad; but I'm no that sure. In a present? What might you get for that now if you were to sell it? for there's plenty folk, I hear, that are foolish enough to give good solid siller for a wheen scarts upon paper." She had the most exalted idea of her son's skill, and secretly admired his work with enthusiasm—with all the naïve appreciation of a "picture" which is natural to the uninstructed but not dull understanding—though she would not have betrayed her admiration for the world.

"What might I get for it?" said Rob, looking critically yet complacently, with his head a little upon one side, at the finished drawing. "Well—if I were known, if I had got a connection among the picture-dealers, perhaps—let us say twenty pounds."

"Twenty pound!" (she drew a long breath of awe and wonder); "and you'll go and give that light-headed lassie, in a present, a thing that might bring you in twenty pound!"

Rob did not explain that the bringing in of twenty pounds was an extremely problematical event. He got up with a little thrill of excitement and easy superficial feeling. "I would give her," he said, "just to hear from her—just to have her back again—just to have her hand

in mine—I would give her everything I have in the world!”

“Ay, ay, my bonnie man,” said his mother, impressed for the moment by this little flourish of trumpets. But she added, “And it would not be that hard to do it, if she’ll only return you back your compliment, Rob, and do as muckle for you!”

This was how the sending of the picture “in a present” was decided upon, as a touching, if dumb appeal, to Margaret’s recollection—not to say as “laying her under an obligation,” which it would be necessary to take some notice of; for both mother and son fully appreciated this side of the question, which also forced itself at once upon Mrs. Bellingham’s practical and sensible eyes. Mrs. Glen, for her part, entertained a secret hope that Margaret would have sense enough to see the necessity of giving not only thanks and renewed affection, but perhaps something else “in a present,” which would make a not inadequate balance to Rob’s gift. This was how things were managed by all reasonable people, that neither side might be “under an obligation” of too serious a character. But she was wise enough to say nothing of this to her son, though it is just possible that the thought may have glanced across his mind too. And about the letter which he sent immediately afterward, through Bell, and which produced such results for Margaret, Rob, on his side, said nothing at all.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BELL had left Earl’s-hall when the house was dismantled, a melancholy operation, which was proceeded with soon after the departure of the ladies. Old Sir Ludovic’s library was sent over to Edinburgh, where the greater part had been sold and dispersed. It was, in its way, a valuable library, containing many rare editions and old works of price, a costly taste, which the present Sir Ludovic did not share. Whatever was done with the old house, his wife and he agreed that to get rid of the books would be always an advantage. If they kept it, the long room must be either divided into two, or at least arranged, for the comfort of the family, in a manner impossible at present while it was blocked up with shelves in every corner, and a succession of heavy bookcases.

In these innocent regions it was not necessary to keep servants in charge of an empty house out of alarm for the safety of its contents. Is it not the simple custom, even of householders in Edinburgh, secure in the honesty of their population, to lock their doors for all precaution, and leave emptiness to take care of itself? There was not much fear for Earl’s-hall. If Aubrey Bellingham had known, indeed, that the various “bits” of china that he admired, and the old dresses in the “aunie” in the high room, and the bits of forlorn old tapestry that wanted in the wind, were thus left without any protection, it is very possible that he might have organized a gang of æsthetic cracksmen to seize upon those treasures; but they were not in danger from any one in life.

Bell and John, or rather, to speak correctly, John and Bell, taking with them their brown

cow and all the chickens, removed into a cottage which they had acquired some years before, on the road to the Kirkton, with one or two fields attached to it, and a neat little barn, byre, and poultry-yard. This had been for a long time past the object of their hopes, their Land of Promise, to which they looked forward as their recompense for years of long labor; and it was pleasant, there could be no doubt, to establish the brown cow in the byre and see her “like my leddy in her drawin’-room,” Bell said, making herself comfortable in her new habitation. But it is a very different thing to have only “a but and a ben,” when you have been virtual mistress of a fine old house like Earl’s-hall; and although Bell had always prided herself upon her willingness “to turn her hand to anything,” it did not quite please her to do all the little sweepings and dustings, and fulfil every duty of her little *ménage*, after having Jeanie under her, to whom she could refer all the rougher work which did not please herself. But above all, it was hard upon Bell that she had no longer “the family” to occupy her thoughts, to call forth her criticisms, and rouse her temper now and then, and give her a never-failing subject of interest and animadversion. Bell had a daughter of her own, who had been married as long as she could remember, it appeared to the old woman, and who had no children to give her mother a new hold upon life; and when she had finished her work and sat down in the evening “outside the door,” but with a totally different prospect from that she had been familiar with so long, Bell would talk to any neighbor that chanced to pass that way, and paused to cheer her up—about “my family” and even about “my ladies,” though they were the same whom she had talked of a little while ago with nothing but the definite article to distinguish them, and of whom she had never been fond, though they had risen so much in her estimation now, and she generally concluded the audience by a sudden relapse into crying on the subject of “my Miss Margaret” which filled the Kirkton half with pity for “the poor old body that had been so long in one place, and couldna bide to be parted from them,” and half with indignation that she should “think mair o’ a young lady that wasna a drap’s blood to her, than of her ain.” Mrs. Dreghorn, Bell’s daughter, who kept the “grocery shop” in the “laigh toun,” was strongly of this opinion. “My mother thinks nothing o’ me in comparison with her Miss Margret—aye her Miss Margaret!” said this good woman; but as Mrs. Dreghorn was forty, it may perhaps be allowed to be a different sentiment which Margaret called forth, from that steady-going affection on equal, or nearly equal terms, which subsisted between herself and her mother. Bell could not speak of her child without a moistening of the eyes. “My bonnie bairn!” she was never tired of talking of her, and of the letters Margaret wrote to her; Bell was perhaps the only one of Margaret’s correspondents of whom she was not at all afraid.

Bell, however, was very much bewildered by the hasty, incoherent little epistle which she received in reply to hers, which had contained the letter of Rob Glen. “If you see Mr. Randal Burnside, will you ask him to speak to Mr. Glen? Say I told you to ask him, dear Bell; oh, be sure I said you were to ask him! and Mr. Randal will

understand." What did this mean? Bell grew frightened, and for her part could not understand. The first step in the matter had been strange enough: that Rob Glen should have ventured to forward a letter to Miss Margaret, was of itself a strange and inexplicable fact. But it might be, as he said, about his picture; it might be about some price which old Sir Ludovic had offered. In such circumstances writing might be necessary, and he might not like, perhaps, to write to "the ladies themselves." But Margaret's message made the mystery more mysterious still. It confounded Bell so much that she said nothing about it to John, but wrote with much trouble and pain another letter, begging her young lady "not to trouble her bonnie head about young men; but to leave them to themselves, as being another kind of God's creatures, innocent enough in their way, but not the best of company for bonnie young ladies like her darling."

When, however, Bell had entered this protest, she immediately bent her mind to the due carrying out of Margaret's request. Randal had adopted the habit of coming over from Edinburgh in the end of the week and staying till Monday, a praiseworthy habit which his mother much encouraged, and of which she too spoke with tears in her eyes (so weak are women!) as proving her son to be the very best son in the world, and the very prop and staff of old age to "the doctor and me." It was true enough that he was the delight and support of the old couple in the Manse, of whom one was as yet not particularly old. And if Randal was fond of golf, and arranged "a foursome" for all the Saturdays of his visits, upon the Links which were within reach, in what respect did that affect the matter? A man may be a "keen golfer," let us hope, and a very good son as well.

"Is there any news at the Kirkton?" Bell said, when John came in, throwing off an old furred coat that had been old Sir Ludovic's; for John's bones were getting cranky with rheumatism, and his blood thin, as happens to every man. The fur glistened as he came into the warm room with his breath, which the cold without had fixed like beads upon every little hair. John put it away carefully on its peg, and came "into" the fire, and put himself into his big wooden arm-chair before he replied—

"Naething of consequence; there's a change o' the ministry looked for afore lang, but that's been maistly nye the case as lang as I can mind. Either they're gaun out, or they're coming in; they're a' much alike as far as I can see."

"I wouldna say that," said Bell, who was more of a partisan than her husband. "There's our ain side—and there's the tither side, and our ain's muckle the best. It's them I would stand by through thick and thin—I'm nane o' your indifferent masses," said the old woman; "but it wasna politics I was thinking of. Did you see naebody that you and me kens?"

"Naebody that you and me kens? I saw a' body that you and me kens," said John, taking a very large mouthful of the vowel, which he pronounced aw—"first Katie and her man, just in their ordinar; and syne John Robertson at his door, complaining that he never could find Jeanie; and syne John Armstrong at the smiddy, very strang, shoeing ane of Sir Claude's horses that's to hunt the morn; and syne—"

"Touts, I dinna want a dictionary," said Bell, probably meaning directory; "naebody mair particularly than John here and John there? as if I was wanting a list o' a' the Johns! Weel I wat there's plenty o' ye, young and auld, and great and sma'."

"Is't the wives you're so keen about? I can tell ye naething o' the women; there were few about the doors at this time o' the night, and them just taupies, that would have been mair in their place, getting ready their man's supper, or putting their bairns to their beds."

"Eh, man John, but ye've awfu' little invention," said Bell. "If it had been me that had been to the Kirkton, I would have heard some story or other to divert you with that were biding at hame. But ye canna get mair out of a man than Providence has put intill him," she said, with a sigh of resignation; then added, as by a sudden thought, "You wouldna see any of the Manse family about?"

"Ay did I," said John, provoked to hear any doubt thrown upon his capacity of seeing the Manse family. "I saw the gig trundling up the bit little avenue with Mr. Randal and his little portmanteau that I could have carried in ae hand. But Robert's just a useless creature that will have out a horse for naething, sooner than up with a bit small affair upon his shoulder and carry 't. It's bad for the horse and it's worse for the man, to let him go on in such weirdless ways."

"So Randal Burnside's back again?" said Bell. She did not pay much attention to John's further animadversions upon Robert, who was the man-of-all-work at the Manse. Having at last got at the scrap of information she wanted, she got up and bestirred herself about the supper, and listened to just as much as interested her and no more. In this way at his own fireside, without even Jeanie to disturb him, and no bell to break the thread of his discourse, John loved to talk.

The next day was Saturday, which Bell allowed to pass without any attempt to execute her commission; but when Sunday came, after the service was over, the sermon ended, and the kirk "skailling," in all decency and good order, she seized her opportunity. "Will you speak a word, Mr. Randal?" she said, lingering behind the rest. "Na, no afore a' the folk; but if you'll come round to me at poor Sir Ludovic's tomb yonder, where I'm gaun to see if any wedding's wanted."

Randal gave a hasty assent. His heart began to beat, in sympathy, perhaps, with Margaret's heart, which had beat so wildly when she gave the commission now about to be communicated to him. He got free of the people, doubly tiresome at this moment, who insisted on shaking hands with the Minister's son as part of the performance. "Eh, what a sermon the Doctor's given us!" the kind women said. Perhaps Randal had not been so much impressed by his father's eloquence; but he was very eager to make an end of these weekly salutations and congratulations. He hurried back to Bell, with such an increase and quickening of all the currents of his blood, that the old woman looked with surprise upon his glorified countenance. "I never thought he was such a bonnie lad," Bell said to herself. As for Randal, he tried very hard, but with no success, to persuade himself that what

she wanted with him must be some trifling business of her own. But his heart travelled on to Margaret, and to some chance message from her, with a determination which he could not resist.

"Well, Bell, what is it?" he said.

"I am real obliged to you, Mr. Randal. It's no my business, and it's a thing I canna approve of, that maun be said to begin with. Mr. Randal, I was writing to my young lady, to Miss Margret—"

"Yes?" said Randal, a little breathless, and impatient of the suspense.

"Ay, just that—and ye'll no guess what happened. Rob Glen, that's him that is Mrs. Glen's son at Earl's-lee farm, a lad that was to be a minister—you'll ken him by name at least—Rob Glen?"

"Yes, I know him;" Randal felt as if she had thrown a deluge of cold water upon him; his very heart was chilled. "Oh yes," he said, coldly, "I know Rob Glen."

"Well, sir, what does that lad do but come to me with a bit letter in his hand. 'When ye're writing to Miss Margret, will ye send her that for me?' he said. You may think how I glowered at him. 'For Miss Margret!' I said. He gave me a kind of fierce look, and 'Just for Miss Margret,' he says. You might have laid me on the floor with a puff o' your breath. Miss Margret! so young as she is, far ower young to get letters from any man, far less a lad like Rob Glen."

"But why are you telling me this?" said Randal, half angry, half miserable. "I hope you will not tell it to any one else."

"I will tell it to no one else, Mr. Randal; I'm no one to talk. I have to tell you because I'm bidden to tell you. When I looked like that at the lad, he said it was about a picture that he had drawn of auld Earl's-ha'. And weel I minded the drawing of that picture, and the work my bonnie lady made about it. Well, I sent the letter, and yesterday morning, nae farther gane, I got twa-three lines from her, a' blotted and blurred, poor lamb. I'm thinking the ladies maun have been at her—her that never had a hard word from man or woman! 'Bell,' she says, 'if you see Mr. Randal Burnside, will you tell him to speak to Mr. Glen? Say it was me that bade ye, and then he'll ken fine what I mean.' I hope ye do ken what she means, Mr. Randal, for it's mair than I do; and I canna approve for a young lady, and such a young thing as Miss Margret, only such troke with young men."

Randal's face had been almost as changeable as Margaret's while these words floated on. He reddened, and paled, and brightened, and was overshadowed, one change following another like the clouds on the sky. Finally, the last result was a mixture of confusion and bewilderment, with eager interest, which it is difficult to describe. "I fear I don't understand at all, Bell," he cried. "Was that all? Was there no more than that?"

"No another word; but a' blurred and blotted, as if she had been in an awfu' hurry. And ye canna understand? She said you would ken fine."

"I think I understand a little," Randal said, ruefully. He had asked her to call upon him whenever there was anything in which she want-

ed help, and here it was evident she wanted help; but of what kind? Was he to help her lover, or to discourage him? But of this Margaret gave no intimation. The office in itself was embarrassing enough, and what man ever received a more mysterious commission? She had appealed to him for aid, and who so willing to give it? But what kind of aid it was she wanted he could not tell. "I know in a way," he said, "I know she wants me to do something, but what? Never mind, I will do my best to find out; and when you write to her, Bell, my good woman, will you tell her—"

"Na, na," said Bell, briskly, "no a word. I've had enough to do with that kind of thing. I'll carry no message, nor I'll take charge o' no letters; na, na, lads are a destruction to everything. And no a lad even that might be evened to the like of her. Na, na, Mr. Randal, it might be the maist innocent message in the world; I'm no blaming you, but I canna undertake no more."

"And I think you are quite right," he said, confusedly; "but—what did she want him to do?" He went away in great perplexity and excitement, which it was very difficult to shut up within his own bosom. To speak to Glen—that was his commission; but with what object? To help Margaret, poor little Margaret caught in the toils, and who had no one to help her; but what did she want him to do?

Randal went out after afternoon church was over, the "second diet of worship," as his father called it. It was not a promising evening for a walk. The short November day was closing in; the foggy atmosphere was heavy and chill—the clouds so low that they seemed within the reach of his hand. Hedge-rows and trees were all coated with a chill dew which soon would whiten with the night's frost; everything was wet underfoot. Even in the "laigh toun" few of the people were "about the doors." Gleams of ruddy fire-light showed through the cottage windows, often over a moving mass of heads, of different sizes, the children sitting about "reading their books" as became a Sabbath evening, and the elders on either side of the fire carrying on solemn "cracks," each individual furnishing a remark in slow succession. In-doors there was something drowsy and Sabbatical in the air; but there was nothing drowsy or comfortable out-of-doors. Randal walked toward the farm in the grim gray wintery twilight, wondering whether he could make any plausible errand to the house, or how he was to make sure of seeing Rob. But Fortune favored him in this respect, as indeed Fortune could scarcely help favoring any one who, wanting Rob Glen, walked in the twilight toward Earl's-lee. When he was within a field or two of the farm-house, Randal became aware of two figures in the shadow of a hedge-row, and of a murmur of voices. He divined that it was a "lad and lass." Lads and lasses are nowhere more common spectacles, "courting" nowhere a more clearly recognized fact than in Fife. Randal took care not to look at them or disturb them; and by-and-by he saw a little figure detach itself out of the shadows and run across the field. Who could it be? Their fervor of love-making must be warm indeed to enable them to bear the miseries of this "drear-nighted November." He went on with a certain sympathy and a little sigh. Randal

did not feel as if there could ever be any occasion for "courting" on his part. He was vaguely excited; but sadness, more than any other feeling, filled his mind; if he saw Rob before him, what was he to say to him? "Ah, Glen!" he exclaimed, "is that you?" while yet this question was fresh in his mind.

Rob came forward from the shadow with evident discomfiture. He recognized the newcomer sooner than Randal knew him. Was he, then, the man who had been whispering behind the hedge, from whose side that little female figure, not, he thought, unknown to Randal either, had flitted so hurriedly away? Hot indignation rose in Randal's veins.

"Can it be you?" he said, with a sudden mingling of displeasure and contempt with the surprise in his voice.

"Not a pleasant evening for a walk," said Rob. He was uneasy too, but he did not see what he could do better than talk, and forestall if possible any objection the other might seem disposed to make. "I dropped something in the ditch," he said, accusing as he excused himself, "but it is evidently too dark to hope to find it now."

"You are still staying here?" said Randal, still more contemptuous of the lie, and feeling a secret desire, which almost mastered him, to push his companion into the chill ooze under the hedge-row. "Though the country," he added, "has not the same attraction as when we met last."

"No," said Rob, with a slight falter, "that is true; but necessity has no law. I am here because—I have nothing to do elsewhere. I am not so lucky as you, to be able to hold by and follow out the trade to which I have been bred."

"That is a misfortune, certainly."

"Yes, it is a misfortune—and such a misfortune in my case as you can scarcely realize. I have disappointed my friends and put them out of temper. There could be no harm in abandoning the law, but there is great harm in abandoning the Church."

"There is always harm, I suppose," said Randal, "in throwing up the career in which our training can tell. Church or law, it does not so much matter; there is always disappointment in such a drawing back."

"Perhaps that is true; but most in the first, and most of all in my class. Yes," said Rob, suddenly, "you may say there is less attraction now. The last night we met, it was just before the Leslies left Earl's-hall."

"I remember the night," said Randal, with some irrepressible bitterness in his tone.

"I am sure you do. I felt it in your tone tonight. You disapproved of me then; and now," said Rob, with an air almost of derision, and he laughed a little nervous, self-conscious laugh.

"I don't pretend to any right either of approval or disapproval," said Randal. Anger was rising hotter and hotter within him; but what was it she wanted him to do?

"No right; but people don't wait for that," said Rob. He was not comfortable nor happy about his good-fortune. He had got Margaret's note, and it had stung him deeply. And here was one who could communicate with her, though he could not—who belonged to her sphere, which he did not. "We all approve or

disapprove by instinct, whatever right we may have. If you had felt more sympathy with me, I might have found a friend in you," Rob went on, after a pause. "When two people, so different in external circumstances as Margaret and myself, love each other, a mutual friend is of the greatest advantage to both."

The blood rushed to Randal's face in the darkness. He felt the veins fill and throb upon his forehead, and fury took possession of his heart. He could have seized the fellow by the throat who thus wantonly and without necessity had introduced Margaret's name. But then—who could tell?—this office of mutual friend might be the very thing she had intended him to take.

"I cannot see what use I could be—"

"You could be of the greatest use. You could find out for me, without suspicion, a hundred things I want to know; or, if you fell under the suspicion of being after Margaret yourself," said Rob, with the unconscious vulgarity which he had never been able to get over, "there would be no harm done. They would not turn you to the door for it. You see our correspondence has to be of a very limited character till she is of age."

"Do you think," said Randal, hotly, "that to carry on such a correspondence at all is right or honorable without the sanction of the friends? No creature so young" (he kept to words as impersonal as possible, not feeling able to use a pronoun to indicate Margaret, whose sacred name ought never to have been breathed) "can understand what such a correspondence is. Glen, since you ask me, as a man of honor you ought not to do it. I am sure you ought not to do it."

"It is all very well talking," said Rob, "but what am I to do? Lose sight of her altogether—for three long years?"

"Is that the time fixed?" said Randal, with dismay.

"When she comes of age. Then, whatever happens, I have sufficient faith that all will go merry as a marriage-bell. But in the mean time—" Rob said, half-bragging, half-mournfully: he was in reality in the lowest depths of discouragement; but the last person to whom he would have confided this was Randal Burnside.

Randal was struck with a sudden thought. "Look here," he said, somewhat hoarsely, "I have given you my opinion, which I have no right to do; but you may make some use of me, in return, if you like. Look here, Glen; I'll get you something to do in my uncle's office in Edinburgh, which will be better than hanging on here, if you'll have patience and wait till the time you mention, and take my advice."

Was this what she wanted him to do? The effort was a great one; for Randal felt a loathing grow over him for the under-bred fellow to whom such celestial good-fortune and unexampled happiness had fallen. To annoy and harass himself with the constant sight of him in order to leave her free and unmolested, it was a sacrifice of which Margaret would never know the full difficulty. Was this what she wanted him to do?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AUBREY BELLINGHAM was in the hall at the Grange when Margaret, all wet and weary, came in from that journey to the post-office. She was very anxious to get to the shelter of her own room, not only because she was feeling ill and wretched, but for the more immediately important reason that she was feverishly anxious to get rid of her wet dress before Jean should see her; for Margaret knew that Jean would more easily forgive a slight moral backsliding than her dishevelled appearance, blown about by the wind and soaked by the rain, and not without traces of the mud. She was ashamed of her own plight, though she had been too tired and had felt too miserable the latter half of the road, to keep up the struggle with the elements. Her feet made a splashing noise upon the tiles as she came in, and were cold as two pieces of lead; so were the hands, with one of which she had tried to keep up her umbrella, till it was blown inside out, when she gave up the struggle. A faint glimmer of anger rose in her when she saw Aubrey, all trim and dry and *point devise* as he always was, evidently waiting for her with the intention of speaking to her in the hall.

"How wet you are!" he said; "I could not believe my eyes when I saw you out in this rain. Could nobody have gone to the village instead of you? Why did you not send me?"

"Oh, you, Mr. Aubrey? It would have been worse for you than me," said Margaret. "I never thought much of the weather; but I cannot wait now to talk. I must run and change my dress. Jean," she added, ruefully looking at her spoiled trimmings, "will be angry about the crape."

"I hope I managed rightly," he said, following her to the stair. "I hope I did what you wanted?"

Margaret gazed at him with blank, wide-open eyes. What had he done? She had forgotten the silent appeal she had made to him in her pain. Aubrey was a man of sense, and he perceived that to insist upon this good office which he had in reality done out of pure good-nature, without any thought of interest, was more likely to hurt than to help him now; so he added hurriedly, "I did not see how wet you are; I cannot detain you an instant longer. Why didn't you send me? You will be ill after this."

"Oh! I never take cold," said Margaret; but how glad she was to struggle up-stairs, holding up the clinging skirts of her wet dress. Fortunately, Mrs. Bellingham, who had a thorough instinct of comfort, kept fires in all the bedrooms, so that Margaret had the glimmer of a little brightness to console her in the bodily misery which for the moment prevailed over all the distresses of her mind. She took off her wet clothing with great haste, and with an impulse to hide it, to keep it from Jean's keen eyes; and when she "was fit to be seen," she sat down to think how she could explain that hurried egress to Jean. The post-bag went from the Grange twice a day, in a regular and orderly manner, as it ought. What need had she to rush through the rain with her letters? But this problem proved too much for poor Margaret's brain; her head kept getting hotter and hotter; her feet, notwithstanding the fire, would not get warm; her

bosom seemed bound as by an iron chain; she could not get her breath. What could be the matter with her? Jean had said she had a cold on the previous night; she supposed it must be that—a bad cold; how stupid and how wretched she felt! She sank back into the corner of the sofa which was opposite the fire; it was very lazy of her to do so, she knew, in broad daylight, when there was all the day's work to do. Margaret planned to herself that she would do it to-morrow—her practising and her French exercises, and all the little studies with which, under Mrs. Bellingham's energetic guidance, she was making up for her neglected education. She would do them to-morrow—yes, to-morrow; but was not to-morrow Sunday, when you cannot work? Was not night coming, in which you could do no work? Was not—Here Margaret seemed to break off with a start, and found that she had been dozing, dozing in the middle of the day, in broad daylight! It seemed impossible. She woke wretched, as young and healthy creatures do after such a feverish sleep. How could anybody sleep in the day? and how, of all wonders, was it that Margaret herself had slept in the day? It seemed something incredible; but before she knew what was coming, in those troubled wanderings, she had dropped again into another snatch of uncanny sleep. She did not hear the luncheon bell, nor if she had heard it would she have had energy enough to go down-stairs, or, indeed, to get up from her seat; and when Miss Leslie, coming up, hurried into the room, in wonder and alarm, to call her, Margaret was found propped up in the corner of the sofa, all flushed and confused, her pretty hair falling out of its fastenings, her hands hot and feverish. She woke with a start when her sister opened the door. "Oh! where am I? where am I?" she cried.

After this there was nothing but alarm in the house. The doctor was sent for, and Miss Grace, who had cried herself almost into hysterics, and could do nothing but kiss her little sister, and ask, in a melancholy voice, "Are you better—do you think you are a little better, darling Margaret?" was turned out and sent away, while Jean hastily took the place of nurse. If Jean had a fault as a nurse, it was that she required so many preparations. She assured Margaret it was nothing at all but a feverish cold, and that it would be better to-morrow; but she provisioned the room, as John had provisioned old Sir Ludovic's, as for a siege of six weeks at least, and took her place in a dressing-gown and large cap by the bedside, like a woman who had made up her mind to hold out to the end. Margaret, however, was too ill to be alarmed by these precautions; she was too ill to mind anything except the pain which had her by the throat, and checked her breathing and filled her veins with fire. It was not a bad cold only, but that sublimation and intensification of cold which carries death and destruction under the name of congestion of the lungs. She was very ill for a week, during which time Mrs. Bellingham kept heroically by her bedside, resolute to keep out Grace and to fight the malady in the correct and enlightened way. Aubrey had to search through all the adjoining town, from shop to shop, for a thermometer good enough to satisfy his aunt, which she received from his hands in all the mingled solemnity and familiarity of her nursing-dress.

"I am sure the Red Cross has nothing half so imposing," he said, in his flippant way; "you would strike an army with awe." He himself had but a dull time of it down-stairs. He remained till Margaret was out of danger—very kindly solicitous—but when the crisis was over he withdrew. "You see I can make no progress now," he said, on the occasion of an interview which Mrs. Bellingham awarded him, when the good news was proclaimed; "but perhaps a week or two hence I may come in with the chicken and champagne, and help to amuse the convalescent. One may make a great deal of running with a convalescent, Aunt Jean."

"I wonder how you can talk so lightly, when we have just escaped such a danger," said Mrs. Bellingham. "Not only Margaret, poor dear, but the property would have gone to quite a distant branch of the family, and even the savings of the minority. I can't bear to think what might have happened. But you can do nothing now, it is true; you may as well go and return when you will be of use. But mind and go to the very best shop you can find in town, and get me a really good thermometer. I put no faith in anything that is bought in the country." And that night, for the first time, Mrs. Bellingham permitted herself to go to bed.

It would be needless to follow Margaret through all the feverish thoughts that assailed her, or even those more coherent ones that came after the first stupor of illness. She recovered the power of thought now and then by intervals, as the fever abated, and then, no doubt, soft, dreamy musings, half dismal, half pleasant, of a pretty grave somewhere which would cut all the knots that bound her, and make all things clear, came into her mind. If she were to die, how little would it matter whether Jean was angry, whether Ludovic scolded! They would all forgive her, even if she had been silly. And though poor Rob, to whom her heart melted, as the one person whom she felt sure (besides Bell) to be very fond of her, would, no doubt, "break his heart" over that grave of hers, it would, she thought, be less hard for him, than to find out how little pleasure she took in the bond between them, and to bear the brunt of that struggle which she had so little heart to encounter—the struggle with Ludovic and Jean. And then another thing: what would it matter if Aubrey were right after all, and it was really Effie, *Effie* that Randal Burnside cared about? They would be happy, no doubt; and they would sometimes give a sigh to poor little Margaret, and tell each other that they never thought she would live long.

This wrung Margaret's heart with an exquisite pity for her poor young tender self, cut down like a flower. And as the fever recurred, she would lose herself in wonderings where they would bury her; if they would take her down to the Kirkton, and lay her with her father in the breezy mound where she would be able to see her own hills, and hear, on stormy nights, the moaning of the sea? And then it would seem to Margaret that she was being rolled and jolted through a vast darkness going toward that last home of the Leslies—dead at eighteen, but yet feeling and seeing everything, and half pleased with the universal pity. Over all these wanderings of sick and feverish fancy Jean presided in her big cap, the shadow of which against the

wall—sometimes rigidly steady, with a steadiness that only Jean could possess, sometimes nodding so that Margaret trembled, feeling that nothing could survive so great a downfall—ran through them all. Jean, in her big cap, was very tender to the girl. She was very quiet in her movements, and, notwithstanding the nodding of the cap, very vigilant, never forgetting an hour or dose.

The strangest week it was!—the time sometimes looking not an hour, since she had begun to doze in the corner of the sofa, sometimes looking like a year, during which she had been wandering through dreariest wilds of confusion and pain. When she came to herself at last, without any choking, without any suffering, but utterly weak and passive, Margaret did not quite know whether she was glad that she was better, or disappointed to feel that everything outside her was just of as much consequence as ever; that she would have to marry Rob Glen, and submit to Jean's scolding, and wonder if it was true about Randal and Effie—just the same.

But she did not recover in the speedy and satisfactory way which was desired. When she got what her anxious attendants called almost well, and got up and with an effort got herself dressed, it was astonishing to find how few wishes she had. She did not want anything. She did not care about going down-stairs, did not want to get out, and was quite content to be let alone in her corner of the sofa, reading sometimes, still oftener doing nothing at all. At this point of her convalescence it was that Jean had retired, leaving the remainder of the nursing to Grace, who, with a great grievance at her heart on the score of being shut out of the sick-room, took the place now offered her with enthusiasm, and did her best to administer the wines and jellies, the beef-tea, the concentrated nourishment of all kinds which were wanted to make her charge strong again. One day, however, Jean, returning from some outside occupation, found the sick-room in a grievous state of agitation. Margaret had fainted, for no particular cause that any one knew; and Grace and Miss Parker stood weeping over her, scarcely capable of doing anything but weep.

"Her mother, bless her, was just like that," Miss Parker was saying. "I often thought afterward if we had taken her abroad for the winter it might have been the saving of her. The doctor said so, but no one would believe it. Oh, if we had only taken her abroad!"

This was said in the intervals of fanning Margaret, who lay extended on the sofa as pale as marble, while Grace held salts to her nose. Margaret came to herself as her sister came into the room, with a shiver and long sigh, and Jean, rushing in, cleared away the two incapable persons and resumed the charge of affairs. But, like a wise woman, she took a hint even from her inferiors. When she had restored poor Margaret and made all quiet and comfortable round her, and ordained that she was not to talk or be talked to, Jean's heart throbbed with terror. Not only did Margaret herself seem in renewed danger, but there was the estate to be considered, which would go away to a distant cousin, and do no one (as Mrs. Bellingham said) any good. When the doctor came, she consulted him with great anxiety on the subject. "Yes,"

the doctor said; "no doubt it would be very good for her to go to Mentone for the winter." He would not say she was in any particular danger now, but delicate, very delicate; all the Sedleys had been delicate, and it must not be forgotten that her mother died young. All this made Jean tremble. The girl herself, though she had been almost a stranger to her a little while ago, had got hold of her fussy but kind nature. She had nursed Margaret successfully through a serious illness; was she to submit to have her snatched out of her hands now for no reason at all, with no disease to justify the catastrophe? Jean said No stoutly. She would not submit.

"My dear, I am going to take you to Mentone," she said. "I hope you will like it. It is very pretty, you know, and all that. There are a great many invalids; but, poor things, they can't help being invalids. I am very sorry we shan't enjoy Christmas at the Court; that is a thing that would have done you good. But, to be sure, as we are still wearing deep mourning, we could only have gone to the family parties, which are not very amusing. Grace, you may as well begin your packing; you always take such a time. I am going to take Margaret to Mentone."

"Oh!" cried Grace, ready to cry, "dearest Jean! then the doctor thought that dear Margaret—"

"The doctor thought nothing about Margaret," cried Mrs. Bellingham. "The doctor thought what I told him. I said Mentone would do the child good after her illness, and all that has happened, and he agreed, of course. That is all they can do. They tell you to go if they think you will like it. If they think you will not like it, they recommend you to stay at home. I'll take Aubrey with me: he will always amuse Margaret."

"And, dearest Margaret, how good it is of dear Jean to settle it all! Do you think you will like—"

"Like! of course she will like it," said Jean. "We shall start in a week; so you had better speak to Steward about your packing. A day will do for Margaret and me."

"Mentone? that is Italy!" said pale Margaret, with a little glow rising upon her face; and then she put her pale little hands together, which were as small as a child's, and said to herself, inaudibly, "That is *away*!"

She got a little better from that hour. All the circumstances of her bondage, all the risk of discovery, the chance of agitating letters, such as those which had been the cause of the exposure that had ended in her illness, had come rushing back upon her memory. And it was a sudden intimation of some letters that had been put aside for her that had caused her faint, overpowering her, in her weakness, with sudden agitation. Letters! What might they be? She dared not ask for them. She dared not say anything about them in case of questions which she could not answer. He might be coming, for aught she knew, to haunt the neighborhood of the house, to watch for her, to waylay her, to claim and take possession of her, whether she liked or not. It is not to be described what a soft gush of ease and relief and quiet came over her, when she realized that she was now to be taken *away*. Away! out of reach of all painful

visitors, where it would be too far for him to come after her, where she would be safe. Margaret mended from that hour. And when, by means of Miss Parker, of whom she was not afraid, she managed that evening, while Jean and Grace were at dinner, to get possession of the letters, and found one from Bell giving an account of the execution of her commission, and another from Randal, her heart threw off its burden, although Randal's letter filled her with strange yet pleasant excitement. She was not frightened by it as she had been by Rob's letter, but felt, on the contrary, a great thrill of eagerness and wonder. Would he say anything about Effie? This, however, was all Randal said:

"DEAR MARGARET,—If I may call my old playfellow so, I got your message, and thank you most cordially for it. I understood it, though I did not know what you wanted me to do. But I will tell you what I did. I saw him: he was anxious and complaining. I advised him to have patience, not to attempt to write, which would probably put you in a false position, and offered him a place in my uncle's office. He has accepted, and he will take my advice. If this is not what you meant, let me know by one word. I thought it was for the best; but if silence is disagreeable to you, it is I that am to be blamed, not any one else. Thank you, with all my heart, for understanding that I would serve you, if there was any need, with my life. Yours ever,

"RANDAL BURNSIDE."

How her heart bounded! She seemed to have found some one who would set things right, who would manage those disturbed affairs for her. It did not occur to her that she had no right to put such a charge upon Randal, or make him her agent. That idea never entered her mind. How well he had divined what she wanted! The way in which he told her of it was very curt and brief, it is true, and she felt disposed to wonder why he had put it in such few words; but it relieved her of all her fears. It was in Randal's hands now. Randal would not let *him* come to worry her. Randal would save her from all this trouble. Jean heard her laugh, as she was coming up-stairs—heard her laugh, the little monkey! and Mrs. Bellingham was so glad that she could not be angry, though had this outburst happened twenty-four hours sooner, she probably would not have taken her away.

And she was quite equal to the journey when the day came, though she was still weak and white. One incident occurred, however, before they started, which very much surprised Margaret. She was in the wainscot parlor, alone, reclining among her cushions, when Mr. St. John came in. The elder ladies were out, and Margaret had been left alone. Perhaps it was Miss Grace who had suggested this to the gentle Anglican. He came in and sat down beside her, with eyes enlarged by emotion and anxiety; and after he had told her how much sympathy her illness had brought out, and how many people had asked for her, and how fervently they had all thought of her when the prayer for sick persons came in the Litany, Mr. St. John started Margaret beyond measure by suddenly telling her that he loved her, and asking if she would be his wife. "Mc?" she cried, with wondering,

questioning eyes, in profoundest bewilderment and surprise, and with her usual Scotch indifference to her pronouns. She grew paler than ever with horror. "Oh, it cannot be me!" she said, shaking her head. But this gave her a shock of surprise and pain. She did not want to hurt anybody's feelings. Could it be anything in her that made this painful thing happen over again?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AUBREY joined the travellers in London. It was very self-denying of him, very kind, to give up all the festivities at the Court, and all his many Christmas invitations, in order to accompany and take care of a party of ladies on a journey to Mentone, his aunt said; "I will not say that it is not a sacrifice to myself to give up Christmas at the Court. I don't grudge the sacrifice, my dear, for your sake, and for the sake of your health; but I will not say it is nothing and does not matter, as Grace does. Don't you believe, either, that it does not matter to Grace. She likes her amusement just as well as the rest of us, though, to be sure, our mourning would make a difference. But Aubrey is a young man, and has as many engagements as he can set his face to; and we are nothing but a couple of old aunts, and you a bit of a little girl. Yet when he can be of use he never hesitates. You ought to be very grateful, Margaret, for all he is doing for you."

"And so I am," said Margaret: it was very kind. And though Aubrey, when he arrived, scouted the notion, and declared that he would go anywhere to get rid of the festivities of the Court, this did not make any impression upon the ladies, who praised his self-denial to the echo. As for Margaret, there could be no doubt that his presence made the expedition very much more agreeable to her. Jean and Grace were very kind; but Jean was a little overpowering in her manifold arrangements, and Grace's tenderness did not always fall in with the girl's humor, who was apt to be impatient now and then. Margaret got better day by day; and there was so great a load lifted from her mind that she was able to enjoy everything as she had never done before. No chance now that she should be followed and pursued by any attendant of whom she would be afraid. Every step they took made that more impossible. She seemed to get out of the range of Rob Glen altogether when she crossed the Channel, not to say that Randal had already made her deliverance certain.

She dwelt upon this action of Randal in many a musing, with mingled admiration and gratitude. How clever it was of him to divine what she wanted to be done! The confusion of the moment had been partly to blame for the incoherent message she had sent; but it was not altogether the confusion of the moment. There had been, besides, a reluctance to mention the name of Rob Glen to Randal, a desire to imply, rather than to state distinctly, what she wanted him to do. The vagueness was at least partly voluntary, and partly she did not know what she wanted to be done. She wanted something, some one to interpose who should know better than herself, who should be able to see what was

most expedient. What claim had she on Randal that he should have done so much for her? And what inspiration could it be that made him divine so exactly what she wanted—exactly what she wanted!—not to hurt Rob's feelings? Oh no, very far from that. If she had not been unwilling to hurt Rob's feelings, it would never have been in his power to give her so much alarm as he had done.

Margaret sat and thought over all this as they crossed the bit of sea between Dover and Calais. Jean and Grace had betaken themselves to a deck cabin, where they lay each on a sofa, scarcely venturing to congratulate each other that the sea was not quite so bad as usual, but prepared for every emergency, and Aubrey had gone to the other end to smoke a cigar. Margaret, in her excitement, had scorned the deck cabin, which both her sisters protested had been secured entirely for her. She was, though she did not as yet know it, one of those happy people who are excited, not prostrated, by the sea. She felt that she would like to walk about the decks with Aubrey; but all that had been permitted to her was to sit in the most sheltered corner, done up in shawls and wraps, so as to lessen all chances of taking cold. And after a while, when the first thrill of excitement calmed down, and she began to get accustomed to her own emotion, and the fact that she had left England, and the extraordinary certainty that these were the shores of France to which she was going, the extreme isolation of the moment drove Margaret back, as is so often the case, upon her most private thoughts. The exhilaration of her being, which was partly convalescence and partly change, she attributed entirely to the fact that, for the moment, she was free—delivered from the danger that had seemed about to overwhelm her.

This consciousness seemed to triumph over everything—her grief which was still so recent, her illness, all the ills her flesh was heir to. And as Margaret's mind was growing amidst all this agitation, it was now, at this moment, in the middle of the Channel, that the thought suddenly occurred to her: if she had been a sensible girl—if she had not been a very foolish girl, how much better it would have been to pay no heed to Rob Glen's feelings—to cut at once this bond which was all his making, which had been woven between them without any wish of hers—which she had always rebelled against, except those first nights when she had scarcely been aware what he was saying, or what doing—when she had received his declarations of love almost without hearing them, and allowed his kisses on her cheek with no more perception of their meaning than that he wanted to be "kind" and comfort her. There had been no lover's interview between them in which Margaret had not—a little—shrunk from him. She had held herself away as far as she could from his embracing arm. She had averted her cheek as much as possible; but it had been impossible for her to fling away from him, to deliver herself altogether at the cost of Rob's feelings. This she had not strength of mind to do. But now she perceived that it would have been better had she done it—had she said plain No, when he declared his love with all the hyperbole of passion.

Margaret knew she did not love him, certainly not in that way; but how she had shrunk from

saying it—from letting him feel that she did not care for him as he cared for her! How it would have hurt his feelings! Rather put up with some little excess of affection for herself, she thought, than humiliate him in this way! And now was the first time when she really asked herself, Would it not have been better to say the truth? The question flushed Margaret's cheek with crimson, then sent back all her blood in a sudden flood upon her heart. She did not venture to contemplate the possibility of having done this—of having actually said to him, "It is a mistake; you are very—very kind, but I am not in love with you."

The mere idea of it appalled her. How cruel it would have been! How he would have "thought shame!" How his feelings would have been hurt! But still—but still—perhaps it would have been better. She had just become pale and chill all over with the horrible possibility of having given such pain as this, when Aubrey's voice startled her. He was saying, anxiously,

"I am afraid you are ill. I am afraid you are feeling cold. Won't you go into the cabin and lie down? We shall be there in half an hour."

"Oh no!" said Margaret, her paleness disappearing in another sudden blush. The days of her blushing—her changes of countenance, which were like the coming and going of the shadows—had come back. "Oh no! I am not cold; and I am not ill. I like it. But I—was thinking—"

"I wonder if I might offer you a penny for your thoughts? I dare say they are worth a great deal more than that. Would you like to have mine? They are not worth the half of a penny. I was thinking what poor creatures we all are—how unamiable we are on board of a steamboat (the most of us). Look what pictures of misery these people are! It is not rough, but they cannot believe that it may not be rough any moment: when there is a pitch—there—like that!" said Aubrey, himself looking a little queer. "They think, now it is coming! All their strength of mind, all their philosophy, if they have any, cannot resist one heave of that green water. Ugh—here's another!" he cried, relapsing out of his fine moral tone into abject sensationalism. Margaret laughed as merrily, with her eyes dancing, as if there was no Rob Glen in the land.

"But I don't care," she cried. "I like it: when it seems to go from under your feet, and then bounds like a greyhound."

"Don't speak of it," he said, faintly. "And why is it you are so superior to the rest of us? Not because you are so much brighter, and purer, and better—"

"Oh no!" cried Margaret, interrupting him, shaking her head and smiling. "Oh no! for I am not that—"

"You should not contradict people who are older than yourself—it is not good manners," he said, solemnly. "You are all that, I allow; but that is not the reason. It is simply because of some little physical peculiarity, some excellence of digestion, or so forth, if one may venture to use such a word: not because it is *you*—which I should think quite a natural and proper reason. No, for I have seen a creature as fair and as good almost as you are, Margaret (our travel-

lers' names are Margaret and Aubrey, you know—that's understood), I have seen a beautiful young girl, everything that was sweet and charming, lying dishevelled, speechless, a prey to nameless horrors. Ah! that was a bad one!" said the young man, unable to conceal that he himself had become extremely pale.

"Oh! I am very sorry for her," said Margaret, forgetting the compliment in the interest of the story. "Who was she, Mr. Aubrey?" and she turned her sympathetic eyes full upon him, which was almost more than, in his present state of sensation, he could bear; but, happily, Calais was within a stone's-throw; and that is a circumstance which steals the suffering to endurance. He got up, saying, "I think I must look after the aunts."

Margaret looked after him with a warm gush of sympathy. Who was this beautiful young girl who had been so ill? Was poor Aubrey, too, "in love?" She felt disposed to laugh a little, as is natural in the circumstances; for does not every one laugh when a love-story is suddenly produced? But she was deeply interested, and at once felt a kindred sympathy and affectionate interest opening up in her bosom. Poor Aubrey! Had anything happened, she wondered, to the beautiful young girl who was everything that was sweet and charming? Was not that enough to make everybody take an interest in her at once?

Margaret got no immediate satisfaction, however, about that beautiful young girl, but she often thought of her; and when she saw any shadow come over Aubrey's face, she immediately set it down to the credit of this anonymous young lady. For the moment, however, she was herself carried away by the excitement of being "abroad." But, alas! is not the very first of all sensations "abroad" a bewildering sense that it is just the same world as at home, and that "foreigners" are nothing else than men and women very much like the rest of us? For the first hour Margaret was in a kind of wonderland. The new, unusual sound of the language, the different looks of the people, delighted her, and she could understand what they were saying; though both Jean and Grace declared it to be such bad French that they never attempted to understand. "Is it very bad French?" she whispered to Aubrey; "perhaps that is why I know what they mean." And he gave her a comical look which made Margaret inarticulate with suppressed laughter. Thus the two young people became sworn allies, and understood each other. But, after the first hour, the old familiar lines of the world she had been previously acquainted with came back to Margaret. The people, though they were dressed differently and spoke French, were the same kind of men and women as she had always known. Indeed, the old women in their white caps looked as if they had just come from Fife.

"That is just what they were at home," she said again to Aubrey; "the old wives—those that never mind the fashions—even Bell!" There were some of the old women on the French roads, and at the stations, so like Bell that the sight of them brought tears to Margaret's eyes.

"Who is Bell? I have so often heard of Bell: Bell has been put forward again and again, till I am afraid of her. I am sure you are afraid

of her; and Aunt Jean, too, though she will not say so."

"Oh, not me!" cried Margaret, uncertain as ever about her pronouns; "Bell is—she is just *Bell*. She was our house-keeper; she was everything to me; she brought me up. I never recollect any one else. Afraid of Bell—oh! no, no. But I would not like Bell to know," said Margaret, slowly, "if I did anything that was bad—anything that was *real wrong*—"

"You never will," said Aubrey, "so it doesn't matter; but I should call that being afraid of her. Now there are some people whom you only go to when you *have* done something that is *real wrong*."

"Are there? I don't know. It was Bell that brought me up, more than any one else. She is living now near—on the way to the Kirkton. But you will not take any interest in that."

"I take the greatest interest," said Aubrey; and it so chanced that this conversation, broken off in the railway, was renewed again when they were settled at Mentone, where again old women were to be found like Bell. They passed rapidly through Paris, and settled at once in the place that was supposed to be good for Margaret. But by the time they reached the sunny Riviera Margaret had thrown off all trace of indisposition, and evidently wanted nothing but air and sunshine, and a little petting, like other flowers. They had a little villa on the edge of that brightest sea; and there along a path bordered by a hedge of aloes, and with a great stone-pine at the end, its solemn dome of foliage and its great column of trunk relieved against the Mediterranean blue, the two young people took a great many walks together.

One of these evenings specially stamped itself on their memories; the sky was flushed rose-red with the sunset, and all the sounds in the air were soft, as summer only makes them in England: there was a tinkle going on close at hand from a convent-bell, and there was a soft sound of voices from the beach—voices, of which the inflections, the accents, were all dramatic, though they could not tell a word that was said. It was the enchanted hour, the time of natural magic and poetry; and Aubrey, though he was not at all poetical, felt it a little more than he could have believed possible. He had found out how pretty Margaret was—how much prettier, day by day. It was not that there was any striking beauty in her that conquered with a glance; but every morning when she appeared down-stairs, with her color coming and going, with her brown eyes full of such eagerness and lovely wonder, "she grew upon you," Aubrey said. He had thought her very tolerable even at first—no particular drawback to her income and her estate. But by this time he took a great deal of interest in her. She was never the same; always changing from serious to gay, from red to white, from quiet to eagerness. He was interested, never wearied. He had not really found it much of a sacrifice to accompany the ladies, after all. The place was a bore; but then, fortunately, Margaret no longer required to be kept at this place; there was a reasonable hope of moving on to places in which there was more amusement; and Margaret was really amusing, very amusing, as girls go. There was a variety about her which kept your interest alive.

"Did you ever do anything that was *real wrong*?" said Margaret, dreamily, looking out toward the horizon where the rose of the sky met the blue of the sea. She was rather thinking aloud, than realizing the scope of what she said; and it is doubtful whether the girl ever realized the difference between a girl and a man—the very different sense that *real wrong* might have to him, or the equivocal meaning which such words might bear to a listener of so much more experience in the world.

He laughed, startling Margaret from her dreamy musing. "Alas!" he said, "a great many times, I am afraid. Did you? But I don't suppose you know what wrong means."

"Yes," she said, drawing a deep breath, "I am not in fun; once: and it seems as if you never can get better of it. I don't know if it is any excuse that I did it because I did not like to hurt a person's feelings."

"What was it?" he said, lightly; "a little fib—a statement that was not quite justified by fact? These are the angelical errors that count for wrong among creatures like you."

"Then what do you call wrong, if that is not wrong? Aubrey, it was more wicked than that; but I am not going to tell you what it was. I have been dreadfully sorry ever since I did it. But I feel a little easier, a little happier now."

"Perhaps you broke a bit of old Dresden?" he said, "or lost that Venice point Aunt Jean showed me. I should never forgive you for such sins, Margaret. No wonder you are reluctant to confess them. You are happier because nobody could be unhappy in this delicious evening, walking as we are. It is only in such a scene that I could look with complacency upon the heartless destroyer of china, the careless guardian of lace—"

"You are only laughing at me," she said; "I think you are always laughing. Don't you think there is anything in the world more serious than china and lace?"

"Very few things, Margaret. Few things so dear, which you will allow is very serious, and few things so easily injured."

"But oh, Aubrey! I think that is almost wicked, to love a thing that cannot love you again, as much as—more than things that have life."

"I don't do that, Margaret." He looked at her so earnestly that she was almost abashed, yet, fearing nothing, went on, moved by the flowing of her own newly awakened thoughts. "You and Jean, you talk as if a little bit of a cup or a plate—what we call pigs in Pife—was of more importance—What are you laughing at, Aubrey?—because I said pigs? But it is the common word."

"My dear little Margaret," he said, "don't make me laugh, with your pigs. Lecture me. Let us go and sit under the pine and look out upon the sea, and do you preach me a little sermon about real right and real wrong. I am just in the mood to profit by it now."

"You are doing what papa used to do," said Margaret, half laughing, half crying; "he would always make a fool of me. And how should I lecture you? You must know much better than I do."

"I ought, I suppose," he said. The pine stood on a little point, one of those innumerable

fairly headlands that line that lovely coast, the sea lapping softly, three parts round, the foot of the cliff on which it holds its place. The air was more fresh there than anywhere else. The pine held high its clump of big branches and sharp evergreen needles high over their heads: behind them was a bosquet of shrubs which almost hid them as they sat together. The blue sea thus softly whispering below upon the beach, the delicate rose that tinted the sky, the great pine isolated and splendid, how could they recall to Margaret the dark wood, all worn with the winds, the mossy knoll, the big elbows of the silver fir, the moan of the Northern sea with which she had been so familiar? The one scene, though made up of almost the same details, bore no more resemblance to the other than Aubrey Bellingham did to Rob Glen: and where could a greater difference be?

"Yes," he said; "so far as wrong is concerned, I should suppose so. I must be better up in that than you are; but, all the same, I should like you to teach me. Let it be about the right; there you are strong. What must I do to cease to be a useless dilettante—as you say I am?"

"Me? I never said so, Aubrey—not such a word. I never said such a word."

"But you meant it. Tell me, Margaret: if I can cease to be a dilettante and a trifling person, what would you have me be?"

He bent toward her, looking into her eyes, and half put out his hand to take hers; and Margaret, startled, saw once more what it had so much bewildered her to see in Mr. St. John, the same look which she knew in the eyes of Rob Glen. What an amount of experience she was acquiring, ever renewed and extended! This frightened her greatly. She drew away from him upon the garden-seat, and kept her hands clasped firmly together, and beyond the reach of any other hand.

"I do not want you to be anything," she said, "you are very well as you are. You might think upon—perhaps you might think upon—the common folk a little more. When you came to Earl's-hall we did not know what you meant; and sometimes even now Jean and you—I know most about the common folk, they are just as interesting as the others."

"Ah," he said, laughing, but a little discomfited, "you mean the poor. Must I take to visiting the poor?"

"I suppose you call them the poor, in England," said Margaret, doubtfully, "but you know a great deal better than I do, Aubrey; for one thing, you are older. I think perhaps Jean will think I ought to go in now."

"Certainly, I am a great deal older; but not so very much, either. I am twenty-five—just about the right age to go with eighteen. Yes, tell me a little more. I shall recollect about—what do you call them? the common people—not the poor. Go on, my moralist; I am ready to be taught."

"I think I hear Grace calling," she said, rising to her feet. "I am sure Jean will think the wind is getting cold, and that I should have gone in before."

"The wind is as soft as summer," he said, with a little excitement, "and the evening as sweet as—yourself. Wait a little, only a few

minutes; there is something I wish so much to say to you."

"Oh, Mr. Aubrey!" she said, frightened. "Do not say it! I would rather you did not say it. Once I did very wrong, not wishing to hurt a person's feelings; but that is what I must never do any more."

"Are you sure," he said, rising too, with a sudden flush of anger, "that you know what I was going to say?"

Margaret paused, with an alarmed look at him, the color wavering in her cheeks, her eyes very anxious, her lips a little apart.

"What I was going to say," he continued, pointedly, "was, that I fear I must soon leave the villa, and the fine weather, and your delightful society. This kind of holiday life cannot endure forever."

"Oh!" She uttered her favorite exclamation with a look of distress and, he thought, disappointment. This was balm to Aubrey's heart.

"Yes, I am sorry, too. But what can be done when duty calls? My office is getting clamorous, and there is nothing for a man to do here. Now, perhaps, we had better carry out your intention, and go back to Aunt Jean."

And they walked through the garden back to the house, with scarcely a word spoken between them. One way or the other way, both were equally uncomfortable modes of managing such a crisis. She had hurt his feelings! It was better than all that followed the episode of Rob Glen; but still it was not a pleasant way.

CHAPTER XL.

AND it was true that the very next morning Aubrey declared his intention of going away. "My chief finds that the office cannot get on without me," he said, pretending to have had letters by the morning mail; while Margaret sat, not daring to look up, feeling more guilty than she could say. Her consciousness that she was to blame even carried the day over her determined belief in the sincerity and absolute truthfulness of every one about her. Twenty-four hours since she would have accepted Aubrey's statement as a matter-of-fact which left no room for doubt or comment. But now she could not but feel that she had something to do with it, that she had hurt his feelings, which made Margaret feel very guilty and wretched. He had been so kind to them, to her and her sisters, and sacrificed a great many pleasant things to come with them: and this was all her gratitude! She did not like to lift her eyes. When Jean and Grace both rushed into wailing and lamentations, she said nothing. She tried to swallow her tea, though it nearly choked her, but she could not speak.

As for Mrs. Bellingham, she said not half so much to her nephew then as she did after breakfast, when she had him to herself.

"You can't be going to do anything so foolish, Aubrey, my dear Aubrey!" she said; "why, you are making progress day by day! If ever a girl was delighted with a young man, and pleased to be with him, and happy in his society, Margaret is that girl. And you know how anxious I

am, and how it would please everybody at the Court to see you provided for."

"You are very kind, Aunt Jean," he said, with a flush of angry color. "I know you mean nothing that is not amiable and kind; but I think, all the same, I might be provided for in some other way."

Jean, though she was so strong-minded, felt very much disposed to cry at this failure of all her wishes.

"I don't understand you at all," she said; "I am sure there was nothing meant that was the least disagreeable to your feelings. Margaret, though I say it that perhaps shouldn't, is as nice a girl as you will find anywhere; and though her education has been neglected, nobody need be ashamed of her. And you seemed to be quite pleased; and I am sure she is really fond of you."

"Yes, that is one of your Scotticisms," he said; "you mean that as long as I am serviceable, and don't ask too much, Margaret likes me well enough. I don't say anything against that—"

This time Mrs. Bellingham really did put up her handkerchief to her eyes. "I never expected to hear of my Scotticisms from you, Aubrey," she said. "Of course I am Scotch—there is no doubt about it—and I would never be one to deny my country. But I did think that, after spending by far the greater part of my life in England, I might have been free of any such abuse as that."

"My dear Aunt Jean, do you think I meant abuse? I mean that Margaret likes me well enough as a friend—which you call being fond of me. I shouldn't wonder if she would herself say, with all the innocence in the world, that she was fond of me, knowing perfectly what she means; but then I should put a different meaning on such words. She will never be fond of me in my sense; and so, as I have still a little pride left (though you might not think so), it is clear that I cannot be provided for, as you say, in that way."

"What is the matter with you, Aubrey? Has anything happened between Margaret and you. Have you said anything, or has she said anything?"

Aubrey saw he had gone too far, and had almost committed himself; and he did not want any one to think that a mere *ingénue*, a bread-and-butter girl like Margaret, had repulsed or discouraged so accomplished a gentleman as himself. He said, with a little laugh, "My dear aunt, what are you thinking of? That has not been at all necessary. Margaret and I are the best friends in the world. I am very fond of her, as you say. She is a charming little girl. But your scheme will not do; that is all. Was not I quite willing to be provided for? But it will never come to anything. Oh yes, I suppose the chief might be smoothed down; there is nothing so very important going on at the office: but what is the good of it? Margaret and I will stroll up and down the beach, and listen to the band, and all that, and be very fond of each other; but we will never get a step farther than we are now."

"I know what it is," said Mrs. Bellingham—"you are bored; that is the whole business; and I don't wonder. To see all the poor things about, with their sick faces, is enough to make

anybody ill. And Margaret, the little monkey, after giving us such a fright, is just as well as I am. Some one was speaking to me the other day about the villa. I dare say we could get it off our hands quite easily; and in that case, if we go on to some place which is more amusing, will you change your mind—or, let us say, reconsider your decision?"

He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, and then he remembered his interests like a young man of sense. "Well, perhaps I will reconsider my decision," he said.

After this the party went on into Italy, and saw a great many things that filled Margaret with delight and wonder. She expanded like a flower, as the spring came on—that Italian spring which is as youth to whosoever can receive it with an unburdened soul. And to Margaret, who already possessed youth, it was not only delight, but mental growth and expansion of the whole being. Aubrey left them for a time, but returned again to escort them home in that month of May which is the climax of all the splendors of spring. The interval between his going and his coming back did a great deal more for Aubrey than any attentions of his could have done. They were in Florence when he left them, where Mrs. Bellingham and Miss Leslie had already found a number of acquaintances, and where soon they were deep in afternoon teas and social evenings, as if they had been at home.

Margaret had no education which fitted her for the delights of this life, and she could not run about alone in the solemn Italian city as she had done at home; and she missed her companion, who, though he was not clever nor particularly well-informed, understood how to set afloat those half-thoughtful, half-bantering conversations which youth loves, and in which young talkers can soar to heights of wise or foolish speculation, or drop into nonsense, at their pleasure: an art in which, it is needless to say, neither Mrs. Jean nor Miss Grace was skilled; and now and then he had an *accès* of enthusiasm equally beyond the range of the ladies, who walked about, guide-book in hand, and insisted that nothing should be omitted. "Margaret, Margaret! you are running away without seeing half of the pictures. I am only at No. 310," Mrs. Bellingham would say. But when Aubrey was there, the girl was emancipated, and allowed to gaze her soul away upon what she liked and what he liked. How she missed him! She was quite ready, as he said, to declare with fervor that she was "very fond" of Aubrey, and welcomed him when he came back with genuine pleasure. "Oh, how glad I am you are to be with us now till we get home!" she said.

Aubrey looked at her with a glance which was half angry and half affectionate. "You are a little deceiver," he said; "you like me to be with you only so long as I am useful. I am a kind of courier; that is all the good of me."

"Oh no," cried Margaret, "I cannot tell you how much I missed you. It is because you are so kind."

"It is because of me, not because of you," he said, with a frown and a laugh; "and so it always will be, women are so"—he was going to say selfish; but when he caught Margaret's eyes puckered with emotion and wistfulness, looking anxiously at him, he stopped short and changed

the word—"ridiculous," he added, not knowing what she meant, and feeling a little, just a very little, prick in his heart that it was so, and that Margaret only found him agreeable for his good qualities, and not from any inclination toward him within her own being. Her eager reception of him, however, woke a sentiment in him which was not unlike love; he was pleased by the brightness of her welcome: and to be unable to make a girl fall in love with you, a simple girl of eighteen who has never seen anybody, after months of companionship—a girl, too, whom to marry would be to provide for yourself for life—this, there can be no doubt, is humbling to a man of accomplishment and experience. So Aubrey made up his mind to another effort, with more determination, if with less lively hope. He would not quarrel with her if in the long-run she still refused to fall in love with him, but he began to hope that a different result might be attained. He liked Margaret, and Margaret liked him, without any disguise; and, after all, there was no telling: perhaps perseverance on his part, and the habit of referring to him perpetually, and getting a great deal of her pleasure through him, might bring about a satisfactory state of things at the last.

They reached London in the beginning of June, when everything looked at its brightest. What a change Margaret felt in herself! She was no longer the little girl who had been allowed to grow up in all the simplicity of a country maiden, untaught and unsophisticated, at Earl's-hall. She had seen a great many things and places, though that mere fact does not make very much difference. She had learned to think; and there had grown about her that little subtle atmosphere of personal experience which can rarely be acquired in the little world of home. It was not possible for her to identify herself with her old sisters as she might have done with her mother. From the first they had been separate existences, detached from her, though in close incidental conjunction, and so kind to her. She was grateful to them, and loved them as she could, but she was very conscious of the isolations of her existence; and how could she help the little criticisms, the little laughs, the amusement which their "ways" could afford only to one whose life was not involved in theirs, and whose duty to them was less than the most sacred? Such detachedness has much to do with the energy of personal existence. Margaret had begun to feel herself, and to know what her life was, during the hours of solitude that were inevitable; and through the long period of partial companionship in which she went and came, docile and quiet in the train of Jean and Grace, without feeling herself ever identified with them, her own being was slowly developing within her. She had begun to see what the position was that she was born to occupy, and to foresee dimly duties which she had no natural guide to instruct her in, no natural representative to do for her, but which would have to be done otherwise than as Jean and Grace would bid.

These grave foreshadowings of the future came, however, but by glimpses upon Margaret. She had no desire to think of the future: over it there was a shadow which she did not know how to meet. She held it as much as she could at arm's-length, still with a dumb faith in circumstances, in something which might still happen to deliver

her. So entirely had she succeeded in this, that the alarming image of Rob Glen, which every time she thought of him had more and more terrors for her, had not even troubled her in any vision for weeks before the party recrossed the Channel on their way home. But on that passage, as they came back, Margaret suddenly remembered the thought that had occurred to her there as she went away. It was a breezy day, and the sea was not smooth: Jean and Grace lay on sofas in the deck cabin, indifferent to Margaret, and everything else in earth and heaven. Aubrey, not much more strong in this particular, had taken himself and his miseries out of the way. Margaret, in happy exemption, sat alone. But this was not a happy exemption, as it happened; for suddenly there leaped into her mind a recollection of the question she had asked herself first, in this very steamboat, on this very ocean, five months ago—Would it not have been better to disregard Rob Glen's feelings and tell him the truth? "Yes," she said now to herself, firmly, though with pale lips, and a shadow immediately fell over the brightness: the time was coming when her fortitude would be put to the test, when she must meet him and decide what was to be the course of her life—and every tick of her watch, every throb of her pulse, every bound of the boat, was bringing her nearer—nearer to this terrible moment, and to Rob Glen.

They stopped in London for a few days to "do some shopping"—perennial necessity which haunts every mortal—and "to see the exhibitions." This was a thing which Mrs. Bellingham considered absolutely necessary. She had not failed to go through the Royal Academy, with her catalogue in her hand, marking the pictures she liked, once in the last twenty years. Nobody in society could avoid doing this. Whether you cared for them or not, it was indispensable that you should see them—they are always a topic of conversation afterward; and Mrs. Bellingham had seen a dull party redeemed, quite redeemed, by a little knowledge of the exhibitions.

"Oh yes, dearest Margaret, we must stay; dear Jean never misses the pictures, and you and dear Aubrey must see them. Dearest Jean says that all young people should see them; certainly they are very beautiful and humanizing, and will do us all a great deal of good. We are to start as soon as we have had our luncheon. I should have liked to go in the morning, but dear Jean likes to see the people as well as the pictures; and, darling Margaret, you that have never seen anything, that will be so good for you too."

"Not your hat, Margaret, your *bonnet*!" said Mrs. Bellingham; "we are in town: it is not like Florence or Paris, or any of those foreign places where we were visitors. Here you must understand that we are in *town*. Next year we will come up for the season, when we are out of mourning (or almost out of mourning), and you must be presented and all that; but there is nothing to be done in crape; it would be altogether out of the question, and a disrespect to papa. But, such as it is, put on your bonnet, my dear Margaret. We shall see nobody—but we may see a good many people; and you must never forget that you are in *town* now."

The bonnet was put on accordingly, and the ladies went to the Academy, with Aubrey in at-

tendance as usual. Perhaps he did not like it so well as in foreign places, for they were a little travel-worn, and their crape not so fresh as it ought to be; but still the faithful Aubrey was faithful, and went. He knew that if anybody saw him (and of course somebody would see him), it would be supposed that he had expectations from the old aunt in her imperfect crape; or the truth would creep out about Margaret, and he would be forgiven everything when it was known that it was an heiress upon whom he was in attendance. Such facts as these change the external aspect of affairs.

It was a bright day, warm and cheerful, and the Academy, of course, was crowded. Aubrey did not consider that it was his duty to follow Mrs. Bellingham while she made her conscientious round; but he kept close by Margaret, who was half frightened by the jostling and crowd, and could not see anything, and had a vague sense of dread she could not tell why. "I am afraid you have a headache," Aubrey said; but Margaret did not feel that it would be honest to take refuge in that common safeguard of a headache. It was something more like a heartache that she had, though she could not tell why. She was standing looking round her vaguely enough, tired and waiting for a seat, in the great room; in a corner not so crowded as the rest, and Aubrey was coming up hurriedly to tell her of a sudden vacancy on one of the benches, when he was arrested by the sudden change in her countenance. Her eyes, which had been wandering vaguely over a prospect which afforded her but little interest, suddenly cleared and kindled; her face, which had been so pale, was suddenly lighted by one of those flushes of color which changed Margaret's aspect so completely; her lips, which had been so serious, parted with the brightest of smiles. She made a step forward, all lighted up with pleasure, and held out her hand. Aubrey stopped suddenly short in his advance, and looked suspiciously, keenly at the new-comer who produced this change on her. He was not a man who was addicted even to the most innocent of oaths; but this time his feelings were too much for him. "By Jove! the man of Killin," he said; and he was so much startled that the words were uttered half aloud.

"Randal!" Margaret said, all smiling, holding out her hand. "Oh! I did not think I should see any one I knew—much less you. How little one can tell! I had been wanting to go away."

The simplicity of pleasure with which she said this took Randal by surprise. He clasped her hand and held it in his own for a moment with a corresponding self-betrayal. "It seemed too good to be true," he said; and they stood together for a moment so completely absorbed in this sudden delight of seeing each other, that Aubrey gave way to another vulgarism quite unlike his good-breeding: he made as though he would have whistled that long note of wonder and discovery which is one of the primeval signs invented before language. "When did this come about?" Aubrey said to himself; and his surprise was so genuine that he could do nothing but stand half petrified, and watch the course of this singular interview going on in all simplicity before his eyes.

"Jean and Grace are both here," said Mar-

garet, "and Aubrey—Aubrey, whom you saw with us last summer. Oh, Randal, have you just come from home? Are they all quite well? Is it long since you saw Bell? Is Earl's-hall very dreary, standing empty? Oh! I would like to hear about everything. Will you come and see us? But tell me, now, are you staying in London, and what was it that brought you here, just this very afternoon, when I was coming too?"

"My good angel, I think," said Randal, fervently; and again the color rushed over her face, and she smiled—as Aubrey thought he had never seen her smile before.

"Let us say a kind fairy," said Margaret; "but will you come and see us where we are living? For here there is no quiet place to talk. Don't go away though, Randal: Jean and Grace would like to see you—and I too."

"Is it likely that I should want to go away?" he said; and then his face paled a little, and he added: "There is some one else you want to ask me about, Margaret. You will not need to trust to me for information at second-hand." Then he lowered his voice, and said, bending toward her, "Glen is here."

"Oh!" Aubrey could see the usual little exclamation prolonged almost into a cry. She grew quite pale with a dead pallor of fright. "Oh, Randal, take him away; or take me away. What shall I do?" she cried.

"Do you not wish to see him, Margaret?"

"Oh no, no, Randal! Turn round; pretend to be looking at the pictures. What shall I do? Oh, do not let him know I am here! It was that made me ill before. It was—all a mistake, Randal. Oh, I felt sure when I came out to-day something was going to happen; and then when I saw you I thought how silly I had been—that it was something good that had happened: now here is the right reading of it. Oh, Randal, you helped me before; can you not help me again now?"

"I will do anything, whatever you wish," he said; "but, Margaret, if this is your feeling, it is scarcely fair to Glen; I think he ought to know."

"Yes, yes," she said, but in too great a panic to know what she was saying; "which will be the best? Should I stay here while you take him away, Randal? I could stand close to the pictures and put down my veil; or will you take me away? Oh, think, please, for I do not seem able to think! But he would be sure to know me if he saw me with you. Aubrey—oh, here is Aubrey," she said, seizing his arm as he approached; "he will take me: and, Randal, come—will you come to-night?"

"Where?" said Randal, putting out his hand to detain her. Aubrey, with a somewhat surly nod of recognition which the other was scarcely aware of, gave him the address; and almost dragged through the crowd by Margaret's eagerness, went away with her, not ill-pleased, notwithstanding this disagreeable evidence of some mystery he did not understand, to carry her off from the man she had smiled upon so brightly. She had dropped her veil, which was half crape, over her face, and, holding her head down and clinging to his arm, drew him through the crowd.

"Are you ill?" he said; "what is the matter, Margaret?" But she made no reply; and

it was only when he had found Mrs. Bellingham's hired carriage, which was waiting outside, and put her into it, that she seemed to be able to speak. Even then she would not let him go.

"Will you come home with me?" she said, with a sweetness of appeal and a wistful look which Aubrey, with some indignation, felt to be false, after the reception she had given to "that Scotch fellow," yet could not resist.

"I am afraid you must be ill," he said, half sullenly—"yes, if you wish it, I will go with you; but Aunt Jean, I am afraid, will think this very strange."

"There was some one that I did not want to see. Ah!" she cried, putting up her hands to her face and sinking back into a corner of the carriage. Aubrey, looking out where her terrified glance had fallen, saw a man turn round and stare after them as they drove away; but he could not see who or what kind of man this was.

CHAPTER XLI.

WHEN Rob Glen accepted the offer that Randall made him and agreed to the conditions, it was done partly in despite, partly in impatience, partly because the novelty tempted him, in the state of discouragement and irritation which Margaret's troubled response had thrown him into. He had not ceased to be "in love" with her, nor was the impassioned letter he had addressed to her really false, notwithstanding his constant confidential interviews with Jeanie, which would have been the direst offence to Margaret had they been known, or had she really cared for him as he supposed and hoped her to do. Had she been within reach, Rob would have been really as much in love with Margaret as ever; but he was angry and hurt by her indifference, and humiliated, he who had won so much love in his day, that she did not receive his letter with pleasure. Even if she had seen the inexpediency or impossibility of continuing the correspondence, he could not forgive her that she had no word of thanks to send him for the letter, which might have made a girl happy, no breathing of soft response to its impassioned strain. He was pleased to punish her, to revenge himself by the hasty pledge not to write again. Yes, he would punish her. Next time she received one of these letters it should be after months of weary waiting, when she would thank him as she ought.

It was absolutely impossible for Rob to realize that it would be a relief to Margaret not to hear from him at all. The idea was incredible. Never before in all his experience had he met with a girl who was quite insensible to his wooing, and Margaret, who was so young, so artless! She might be afraid to snatch that painful joy; the perils of a clandestine correspondence might alarm instead of exciting her; but that she should not *like* it, was beyond all Rob's acquaintance with human nature, and altogether incredible to him. And thus he would punish her. Edinburgh too would no doubt be more cheerful than the farm in the depth of winter, when his mother's ill-humor and the absence of all amusement would aggravate the short days and long, cold nights, in which even a stroll with

Jeanie was no longer practicable. Mrs. Glen, too, looked favorably on the idea. It would "pass the time." "And you'll be in the way of seeing a good kind of folk," his mother said; "plenty of gentry is aye about thae lawyers' offices. They're in want o' siller, or they're wanting to get rid o' their siller; and I wouldna lose a chance of a good acquaintance. Then, when the time comes, and when you set up in your ain house with your lady-wife, you'll no be without friends."

"Friends made in an Edinburgh writer's office, of what use will they be in the heart of England?" said Rob, with lofty superiority; but he was not displeased by the suggestion. He no more thought it possible that, with his talents, he could fail to "win forward," as his mother said, than he thought it possible that Margaret could really be indifferent to such a glowing composition as the love-letter he had sent her. The only thing in the whole matter that he felt any reluctance about was, how he was to break it to Jeanie, whose sweetness, as his confidential friend and adviser, had been very soothing and consolatory to him. As the decision had to be made at once, there was not even much time in which to break it to Jeanie. He strolled past her father's cottage in the high town on one of the nights when Margaret lay at her worst in a haze of fever, with her life apparently hanging on a thread. But none of all the little knot of people at the Kirkton, whose lives were tangled with hers, were as yet aware of anything that had occurred to her. Rob went slowly past the little window, all glowing with fire-light, where John Robertson sat tired with his work, while Jeanie put away the cups and saucers after their tea. By-and-by it would be necessary to light "the candle," for he had still a job to finish before bedtime; but what did they want with the candle when they were at their tea? Fire-light was quite enough for the scanty meal and the conversation which went on, not without a divided attention on Jeanie's part; for she could not but think that she heard a step outside which she knew.

"I think I will run out for two or three minutes and see Katie Dewar, when you are settled to your work, father," Jeanie said; "she is always complaining, and it's a fine night," she added, with a little compunction, looking out through the uncurtained window. The sense of deceiving, however, was not at all strong or urgent in her, for such little deceits about a lover's meeting are leniently dealt with in Jeanie's sphere.

"You'll no be very long, Jeanie." Her father had a sufficiently good notion of what was going on, and, as he was quite unconscious of any complication in Rob Glen's affections, and quite confident in his daughter's purity and goodness, it did not disturb him much. "Mind that it's a cold night, and dinna loiter about."

"I'll no be very long, father." Jeanie threw a shawl round her, but left her pretty head, with its golden-brown curling hair, uncovered. If it was very cold it was always easy to throw a fold of the shawl over her head. She went out, with her heart beating—not altogether with pleasure. To be with *him* was still a kind of happiness, and it was better even to be the confidant of his engagement with another—which Rob had so cunningly implied would never have existed had

Jeanie's presence hereabouts been known—than to have nothing at all to do with him. She stole along, half flying, in the shadow of the houses, and finally came out into the cold moonlight, at the corner beyond the little square, where she could see some one waiting. Poor Jeanie! her pleasure and her sadness, and the mixture of the sweet with the bitter which was in these interviews, had become a kind of essential elixir to her life.

"Jeanie," he said, after their first greetings were over, "I am going away."

"Going away!" She had to grasp at his arm to support herself. "Ay," she said, drearily, after a pause, "nae doubt; I aye kent that was how it would have to be."

"I only knew it myself yesterday," he said; "I have not lost a moment in telling you. How did you know that this was how it would be?"

"Oh, I kent it," she said, holding her hands clasped to support herself; "it was easy to divine—it was no such a mystery. Weel, Maister Glen, ye'll go to her ye've chosen, and ye'll be—real happy with her. She's bonnie, and she's good, and she'll give ye more, far more, than the like of us could give you. I wish ye luck with a' my heart. Ay, a' my heart! baith her and you."

Jeanie withdrew a step from his side as she spoke, and her voice took something of the soft wail of the dove in the inflections and modulations which mark the native tongue of Fife. It was in a kind of soft cadence that she spoke—too soft to be tragic, but pitiful and wailing, the most pathetic of utterances. Jeanie did not rebel—it was natural, it was right; but the blow went to her heart.

"My foolish Jeanie," he said; "what are you thinking of? Do you think it is Margaret that has sent for me? Do you think she is going to acknowledge me all at once, and that all our troubles are over? No, my dear; you are too simple and too good, my bonnie Jeanie. It is not that. Margaret takes no notice of me. I am going to Edinburgh—to a situation, not for ease, not very far away—and not to her, Jeanie. You must not give me up so soon."

He put his arm round her, and drew her close to him; and Jeanie, though full of better resolutions, was weak with the shock she had just received. She was thankful to lean against him for a moment.

"No that—not to her? when she could settle a' if she pleased. Eh, Rob, ladies are no like—they're no like—"

"You, Jeanie? No; who is like you? Always kind—whatever happens, always ready to forgive. What is that in the Bible, 'Suffereth long, and is kind.' I think that must have been made for you."

"Oh!" said Jeanie—like Margaret, in the soft long breath of that ejaculation—"we shouldna quote Scripture, you and me! for what we are doing is a' wrang. Oh, Rob, it's a' wrang! You that are troth-plighted to another lass—though she is a lady—and me, that—"

"Yes, you that—what of you, Jeanie? not pledged, you must not say so, to another man."

"And if I was," she cried, "what would you have to do with it? it would be but justice. Na, na, that's no what I'm meaning, as weel ye ken. My heart has never had room but for ane. No

—me that should ken better. Oh, dinna, dinna, I canna have it! Me that should have kent better was what I meant to say."

"Why should you know better? How can we tell what will happen in three years? And till three years are over nothing is settled," he said, with a secret thrill of anxiety and pain in his heart to remember that this, unlike much that he said, was altogether true.

"It's true," she said, shaking her head. "My heart's that heavy I can think of nothing but harm; we may a' be dead in three years; and oh, I wish it might be over with me!"

"I cannot have you speak like this," he said. "I am going to Edinburgh—you don't seem to care to hear—to a situation Randal Burnside has offered me. I don't know that I will stay in it long. Very likely it will only be a stepping-stone to something better. I will see you when I come back, which will be often, Jeanie; and indeed I think you might come over to see your friends in Edinburgh—you must have friends in Edinburgh—and see me."

"I'll not do that," said Jeanie, decidedly.

"You'll not do that? I don't think that is quite kind. But never mind, I will come home—often—on Saturday, like Randal Burnside."

"Will you be in the same line as Maister Randal, Rob?"

"I think not just the same line. He pleads, you know, Jeanie, in the Parliament House, before the judges, and I will have to manage cases before they get there. It is a very important business. Failing what I was brought up to—the pulpit, and all that I was trained for—I think my people will be more pleased with the law than anything else. It is always respectable; it is one of the learned professions. I will not deny that it is a very good opening, Jeanie."

"And when do you go away?"

"This week," he said. "I don't want to lose any more time; I have lost all my summer. It would have been better for me if I had never come home. I would have missed you, Jeanie; but then I might have avoided other things that can never be got rid of now."

"Oh!" she said, her heart wrung with the suggestion, pleased with the regret, wounded with the comparison; "I wonder if you would say just the same of me to her as of her to me?"

"How could I, when you are so little like each other?" he said. "But, Jeanie, let us think of ourselves; let us not bring in *her*, or any one. My bonnie Jeanie, when I come back I shall always find you here?"

"I canna tell—the cobbling's no just a grand trade, and what will feed ane does not aye serve two. I think I will maybe take a new place—at the New-Year."

"But not to take you from the Kirkton, Jeanie—not to take you away from me?"

"If it was to take me far, far away—to London, or to America, or New Zealand, where so many are going—and I wish my father would think of it," she said, softly. "Oh! I've great reason to pray, 'Lead me not into temptation,' for I would be far, far better away."

"You are not like yourself to-night, Jeanie. Why should you lecture me to-night, just when you have to say good-bye to me—good-bye for a little while?"

"It would be far, far better if it was good-bye

forever," she said; "but eh, Rob, I canna understand myself'. I would be glad if it was me that was to go—ay would I. I would go to New Zealand, if my father would but come, the morn; but when it's you, a' my strength fails me, my heart goes sinking away from me, my head begins to turn round. I know it's right, but I canna bide it, Rob!"

"My poor little Jeanie," he said, caressingly. "And I cannot bide it, if you speak of what a man likes; but it is better for me that I should not be wasting my time. I should be doing some work that will be worth a man's while. What is money, Jeanie? I shall have plenty of money. But I ought to be known, I ought to think of my name."

"Oh, that's true," she said. "I know well you're no a lad to spend your life in a quiet country place. And that just shows me more and more the difference between you and me, Rob. I shouldna call you Rob—I should say Maister Glen."

"Will you write to me, Jeanie? That was why we lost sight of each other. I did not know where you were; but now I will often send you a letter, and then, on the Saturdays, I will probably come over with Randal Burnside."

"Rob, Mr. Randal is a gentleman, and so will you be a gentleman. No, oh no; you and me should say farewell. I'll aye think upon you. I'll pray for you night and morning; but dinna speak about you and me. We're like the two roads at Earl's-ha' that creep thegither under the trees, and then part, one west, the ither east. Oh, Rob!" said Jeanie, with streaming eyes, "no good will ever come of this. Let us summon up a good courage and part. Here we should part. No, I'll no grudge you a kiss, for it will be the last. It's a' been meesery and confusion, but if we part the warst will be past. Say Farewell, and God bless you, Jeanie!—and ah! with all my heart, I'll say the same to you."

"You are trembling so that you can scarcely stand," he said. "Do you think I will let you leave me like this? I cannot part from you, Jeanie, and why should I? It would break my heart."

"It has broken mine," said Jeanie, fervently; "but rather a broken heart as a false life. Rob, Rob, haud me nae longer, but let me gang to my father. I'm safe when I'm with him."

But it was not for a long hour after this that Jeanie returned to her father, conducted as near as he could venture to go by her lover, who grew more and more earnest the more he was resisted. She went in very softly, with a flushed and glowing cheek, stealing into the cottage not to disturb the solitary inmate who sat working on by the light of his dim candle.

"Is that you, Jeanie?" he said, placidly; "and how is Katie Dewar, poor body?" This question went to the bottom of her guilty heart.

"I'll no tell you a lie, father; I wasna near Katie Dewar. It's a fine night, and the moon shining; I gaed down the road, and then a little up the road, and then—"

"Oh, ay, my lass, I ken weel what that means," he said; "but I can trust my Jeanie, the Lord be praised for it. I'm just done with my job, and it's been a lang job. When the supper's ready I'll blow out the candle, and then if you're onything to tell me—"

"I have naething to tell you," she cried. But as they sat together over their supper, which was of "stoved" potatoes, a savory dish unknown to richer tables, Jeanie pressed upon her father once more with incomprehensible energy and earnestness the idea of New Zealand, which had already two or three times been talked of between them before.

Rob, however, left her with little alarm as to New Zealand. He was deeply gratified by that attachment to himself which made her ready to put up with everything, even the bond which bound him to another; and the struggle in Jeanie's mind between what she wished and what she thought right, which ended in the triumph of himself, Rob, over all other powers and arguments, was very sweet and consolatory to him. It healed the wounds of his *amour propre*. If Margaret did not give him the devotion he deserved, Jeanie gave him a devotion which he did not hesitate to confess he had not deserved, and this reconciled him to himself. The maid made up for the short-comings of the mistress, and perhaps Jeanie's simple worship even gave a little license to Margaret as to the great lady, from whom, in her ladyhood and greatness, the same kind of love was not to be expected. She had things in her power to bestow more substantial than Jeanie's tenderness, and with these she had vowed in due time to crown this favorite of fortune. Rob was a sort of Sultan in his way, and liked the idea of getting from these two women the best they had. He went away from Stratheden a few days after, with his heart quite soft and tender to his Jeanie. He would not forget her this time. He would write to her and say to her what he could not say to Margaret. He would keep a refuge for himself in her soft heart, whatever happened. And, indeed, who could tell what might happen in three years?

While he thus made a settlement which quite pleased him in his affairs of the heart, the other part of his life was not quite so satisfactory. The position which he took in the office of Randal's uncle in Edinburgh was naturally that of a beginner, and he did not "win forward" as he had hoped. When clients came, they preferred to see the principal of the office, and instead of making acquaintance among the gentry, Rob found that all he had to do with them was opening the door to them when they came in, or showing them the way out when they left the office.

He did not say much about this, nor did he reveal his discontent to Randal, having sufficient good-sense to learn by experience, and perceiving that this was indeed quite natural and the only thing to be expected, as soon as circumstances had impressed it upon him. But struggles with reason and circumstances of this kind, if they invariably end in an increase of hardly acquired knowledge, and are thus, perhaps, instructive in the highest degree, are not pleasant. And Rob having made no advance in "position," and having no important work confided to him, but only, as was natural, the most elementary and routine business, soon became heartily sick of the office and of himself. He returned more hotly to his former hopes, as he felt the folly of this, and soon began to be conscious of the utter incongruity between his prospects and his present position. He tried to console him-

self like any child, by imagining to himself scenes of delightful revenge for all those "spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes." When he was Margaret's husband, and the possessor of her fortune, he planned to himself how he too would become a client of the employers who now treated him so coolly. What piece of business would he intrust to them? He would make them buy in Earl's-hall if it ever came to be sold. He would consult them about the investment of the long accumulations of Margaret's minority. But in the mean time, while these grandeurs were not his, the office became more and more irksome to him.

He had lost the habit of work during those idle months at home, where love-making had been his only serious occupation, and indeed he had never had the habits of work necessary here, the routine of certain hours and clearly defined duties, which the more free and less regular work of education is in general so little akin to. He had not been what is called idle in his studies; but then these are always vague, and a young man may make up the defective work of the day at night or at odd moments, which a clerk in an office never can do. After a while, Rob had become so entirely disgusted with the humbleness of his position and the character of his work—so deeply impressed by the incongruity of his present with the future he looked forward to—and so indignantly conscious of powers within him which were capable of something better than this, that he threw up the situation which it had taken Randal no small trouble to get for him, and, without warning, suddenly set out for London, carrying with him his sketches and some slight and frothy literary essays which he had written, with the full intention of becoming a painter and an author, and taking the world by storm. The payment of three months' salary had given him the means for this; and he felt that it was the only way, and that he had known all along it was the only way, to acquire for himself fame and fortune. He had by this time heard of Margaret's illness, and of her absence; but even had he thought of doing so, he had no means of following her into the expense and mystery of that unknown world which the ignorant know as "abroad." Indeed, to do him justice, he went to London with no intention of molesting Margaret, but only with a very fixed determination of making himself known—of coming to some personal glory or profit which should make up to him for the personal failure of the past. Rob had been in London for about a month on that eventful day when Randal Burnside, who was in town upon business, had met him in the Exhibition. They had met not without a certain friendliness; and Randal, curious to know what he was doing, and still more curious to ascertain how much he knew about Margaret, and if he was keeping his promise in respect to her, had engaged Rob to dine with him, and had parted from him only a few minutes before he met Margaret herself.

Meantime Rob, having finished his inspection of the pictures, and convinced himself that there were many there much inferior to his own, though he could find no purchasers for them, was issuing somewhat moodily forth, when a slight figure in black hurrying down the steps before him, and clinging closely to the arm of a man

whom he thought he had seen before, yet did not recognize, caught his eye. He stood and looked after them while the carriage was called, his curiosity awakened he could scarcely tell why. He had followed them down to the pavement, and had just reached it when Aubrey put Margaret into the carriage; and all at once a vision of that well-known face, all tremulous and eager, avoiding, as he thought, his suddenly excited gaze, rose before him. In another moment the carriage was dashing along more quickly than is usual in the streets of London. Rob stood with a gasp gazing after it, and did not come to himself till it was too late to attempt the frantic expedient of jumping into a hansom and rushing after it. He did so when he realized what it was that had happened; but by this time it was too late, and he had not remarked the appearance of the carriage, but only the face in it. Margaret! The sight put sudden fire into his veins. He must see her; he must claim her. It was irrational and monstrous that a girl who was his promised wife should be entirely separated from him. Whether it was her own will or that of her friends, he would not submit to it any more.

CHAPTER XLII.

It was Rob, perhaps, who had the most right to be excited by this unexpected vision; but Randal, who had no right, was also driven half wild by it, and altogether lost his head as he stood gazing blankly about him, and saw Margaret, rather dragging Aubrey after her than being conducted by him, thread through the crowd with such an eager impulse of flight. Few young men could have refused to be a little biassed and shaken from their equilibrium by the sweetness of such a reception as he had just received. The brightening of her countenance, the look of pleasure that overspread her face, the gleam of sweet friendliness and welcome would have been pleasant from any one; but from her who had already touched his fancy and interested his heart—from her to whom already he had given a devotion which was of the nature of friendship rather than love—it was more than pleasant, it set every nerve tingling. His devotion had borne a kind of character of friendship, he thought; for was not love hopeless on her side, pledged as she was? And yet he could not do less than serve her for the sake of her childhood, for the sake of all the associations of the past, but chiefly for the sake of herself, so sweet as she was, so tender, and lovely, and young—the kind of creature whom it would be sweet to shield from all trouble.

It had wrung his heart before now to think how little he could do for Margaret, having no right to stand by her. What right had he to interfere? He was not even a connection like Aubrey, whom he called "that English fellow," just as Aubrey called him "that Scotch fellow" and "the man of Killin." He had to stand by and see her go out into the world with nobody who understood her, her life already fettered by bonds so unsuitable, so foolishly formed, but beyond all power of his to interfere. And now to receive such a welcome from her, to see her face so lit up with pleasure to greet him, went to

Randal's very heart. It seemed to send a corresponding light over his whole being; he did not ask himself what it meant; but it was not possible that Margaret's sudden unaffected lighting up at sight of himself, and her unaccountable horror and terror and flight at the name of Glen, should not have stirred all manner of strange emotions in Randal. He made a virtue of patience for an hour or two until he thought it certain that her sisters would also have gone home, and then he hastened to the address Aubrey had unwillingly given him, missing, by so doing, an excited visit from Rob Glen, who, after driving wildly through the bewildering streets in hopeless confusion, bethought himself that Randal might know where Margaret was likely to be found. They missed each other on the crowded way, and Randal went on, with his head full of dreams, in a kind of intoxication of beatitude and wonder. What a change since this morning had come over the young man's life!

When, however, he reached the place where the ladies were staying, it was into the midst of confusion and excitement that Randal found himself suddenly thrown. Mrs. Bellingham was walking about the room in great commotion, Miss Grace crying softly on a sofa. They received him without surprise as people already too much excited to find any new event unexpected or strange.

"How do you do, Randal?" said Mrs. Bellingham; "I am sorry to say we have scarcely time to receive you as we should like. We had settled ourselves for a week in town, and got very nice rooms and everything; and I had quantities of things to do—the work of a year, I may say. We have no clothes, not an article to put on, and there were a hundred things I wanted. But all is thrown into disorder, all is unsettled, and I shan't be able to do anything. We must go back to the Grange at once without a moment's delay."

"Dearest Jean!" said Miss Grace, with streaming eyes, "you know you said we must just give ourselves up to dear Margaret; and if it makes her ill to stay in London, how can it be helped? Let me go with dearest Margaret, and do you stay and do your shopping—"

"As if I would trust her out of my hands! especially if she is going to be ill again. But here is the thing that puzzles me. Did you ever hear of Margaret being ill, Randal, at Earl's-hall? But here is a girl that was as strong as—as strong as a little pony—in Fife, and she gets congestion of the lungs as soon as she comes to the South, and cannot stay two days in London! I never heard anything like it—of course I am very sorry for Margaret. What have I been doing but devoting myself to her for the last five months? And she was just blooming—would you not have called her blooming, Aubrey? But London does not agree with her. Fancy London not agreeing with a girl! I don't know when I have been so much put out in all my life."

"Is—Miss Leslie—ill?" said Randal, not knowing how to shape the question.

"Yes; she grew faint and ill just after we met you," said Aubrey, looking at him with steady composure. "I thought the best thing to do was to get her out of that beastly atmosphere at once."

"Oh, you did quite right, Aubrey; I am not in the least blaming you. Much better, in such a case, to leave at once; for if she had fainted outright, in the middle of the crowd, that would have been a pretty business! I never was used to girls who fainted," said Mrs. Bellingham, plaintively. "I have known them to get bad headaches when there was nothing going on; but fainting, just when we were all amusing ourselves—and we have got a box at the opera to-night! it really is enough to send one out of one's wits—a box at the opera! and you know what a chance that is."

"But, dearest Jean! do you go; I will stay with dear Margaret. I shall not mind it; indeed, I shall not mind it *much*; and you know she has been persuaded; she has given up the idea of going home to-night."

"Going to-night was simply impossible! we are not all born idiots!" said Mrs. Bellingham, with a vigor of language which betrayed her nationality. Then, calming down a little, she seated herself and began to pour out the tea, which had been neglected. "I am sure I beg your pardon, Randal, for letting you see me in such a 'fuff.' But it is provoking, you will allow. And as for going to the opera by myself, or with only Grace, instead of having a pretty, fresh young girl by our side that everybody would remark! I declare one would need to have the patience of a saint not to feel it. Oh, ill? No, I don't think she is very ill; just upset, you know. Indeed, I should have said it was more like a fright than anything else; but Aubrey says there was nothing—no accident, nor runaway horse, nor man killed. I've seen that happen in London streets, and very awful it was."

"No," said Aubrey, steadily, "there was nothing of that sort; but the atmosphere was bad enough for anything; and then the fatigue of the journey—"

"Do you take sugar in your tea, Randal? So many people take no sugar, it is always a trouble to recollect what you young people take and what you don't take. Well, I suppose we will just have to make up our minds to it. Steward can stay with Margaret to-night, and we will go. It is no use throwing away a box at the height of the season."

"But, dearest Jean, let me stay with dear Margaret. I don't really mind. I am sure I don't mind—"

"And to-morrow we must just go back," said Mrs. Bellingham, sweeping on in the larger current of her discourse. "You must remember me very kindly to your excellent father and mother, Randal. I hope we shall see them in the autumn. We are pretty sure to be in Fife in the autumn. Margaret will be distressed not to see you; but, after all that has happened, I thought the best place for her was just her bed; so I made her lie down, and I don't like to disturb her. She will be quite distressed not to see you, when you have been so kind as to take up your time calling—which really is a thing, with people only up in town for a few days, that I never expect. You must have so many things to do."

This Randal took as a hint that he had at present "taken up his time" and hers long enough, and he went away horribly disappointed, tingling with pain as he had done with pleasure and excitement when he came, yet, but for

the disappointment, not so entirely cast down as he might have been. Margaret's determined flight, her abandonment of the place where Rob Glen was, even though that place was London—large enough, it might be supposed, to permit two strangers to inhabit it at the same time without meeting—and her evident horror of the engagement between them, made Randal's spirits rise more than his disappointment subdued them. This bondage once cleared away, and Rob Glen dropped back again into the regions to which he belonged, who could tell what might happen?

There was but one thing that abode a prominent alarm in his mind, after the first sting of disappointment was over, and that was "the other fellow," who lied so calmly on Margaret's behalf. Was he in her confidence too? Randal felt that to possess her confidence as he himself did was as great a privilege as any man could have; but somehow, curiously enough, it did not seem to him either so sacred or so seemingly that Aubrey should possess it too. He felt that the suggestion of this wounded him for Margaret's sake. She ought not to take a young man into her confidence—it was not quite delicate, quite like the perfection of Margaret. This was the only thing that really and permanently troubled him as he went away.

And he had not been long back in his hotel when, a little before the dinner hour at which he expected Rob to appear, the chief hero of the whole entanglement suddenly made his appearance in a very evident state of excitement. Rob was pale, his eyes wild with anxiety, his hair hanging dishevelled over his forehead, as he wiped it with his handkerchief, and his coat covered with dust. He looked eagerly round, though he did not know himself what he expected to see. He waited till the door was closed, and then he said hurriedly, "Burnside, I have seen Margaret; I saw her coming out of the Academy when I met you this morning. I have been rushing about half over London after her, and I cannot find her. Have you heard anything or seen anything, or can you guess where she is likely to be?"

"Sit down, Glen."

"Sit down!—that is no answer. I don't feel as if I could sit down until I have spoken to her. Tell me where you think she can be."

"Glen, I want to speak to you. I have something to say to you. They are gone, or going away, that much I heard. I saw Mrs. Bellingham this afternoon, and she told me that her sister was ill again, and that they were off at once. She found that London did not agree with her."

"Ill again?—gone away!" said Rob, hoarsely: then he threw down his hat upon the table with an exclamation of annoyance and pain. "It is not treating me fairly. I ought to see her," he cried, and threw himself, weary and angry, upon the nearest chair.

"I think so too," said Randal, seriously. "I think you ought to see her. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Glen; but I think you should see her, and make her tell you candidly the state of affairs."

"What do you mean by the state of affairs? If it is that her family are opposed to the existence of any tie between her and me, that is

no new discovery. I know that, and *she* knows that I know it."

"That was not all I meant, Glen—that is bad enough. You know my opinion. As a man of honor, I think you have a duty even to the family; but this is different. She is not happy. I think you ought to have a full explanation, and—set things on a right footing."

"What does setting things on a right footing mean?" Rob said, with an attempt at a sneer, which was more like a snarl of despair. He had not found it such easy work "making his way" in London. His money was running short, and he had nothing to do, and no prospect of being able to support himself much longer. Margaret was his sheet-anchor, his sole hope in the future. He thought, too, that the rapid dash away of the carriage was not accidental, that she had seen him and driven him wild; and this bitter reflection embittered him, and made him ready to take offence at anything or nothing. He was miserable altogether, excited, distracted, anxious—and tired to death besides. He had taken nothing since the morning, having rushed off in wild pursuit of her instead of getting his usual mid-day meal. He bent down his head upon his folded arms, after that angry question, and thus defeated all Randal's disposition to find fault or blame him, if there had been any such disposition in Randal's mind.

On the contrary, however, the young man's heart, softened by the gleam of brightness that had seemed to come upon his own life out of Margaret's eyes, melted altogether over the unlucky presumptuous lover, the fool who had rushed in "where angels might fear to tread," the unfortunate one who had lost all chance of that prize at which he had snatched too quickly and too roughly. Randal forgot to think of his presumption, of his doubtful conduct, and all his offences against good taste and the highest standard of honor, in sheer pity for the downfall of him who had soared so high. He laid his hand upon the other's shoulder.

"Glen," he said, "you are not the first who has made a mistake, or who has been the victim of a mistake. That is no disparagement to you: it is only continuing in the mistake that would be blamable. You and she—let her name be sacred—I do not like even to refer to her—"

"Who? Margaret?" said Rob, defiant. He would have his way, whatever the other might think. "I have no reason to be so shy about her name. Advice is very seldom palatable in the best of circumstances; but between me and Margaret—" Because Randal had deprecated the use of her name, he insisted on using it. He had a kind of insolent satisfaction in turning it over and over. "Between me and Margaret," he said, with a laugh, "there is no need of advice, that I know of—we understand each other. Mistake there is none between Margaret and me."

Randal bowed very gravely—he did not smile. The color wavered over his face—then departed. "In that case there is nothing to be said."

"Not a word; Margaret and I understand each other. Margaret—I suppose I can wash my hands somewhere before dinner. I am as dusty as a lamplighter with rushing about."

And they dined together, talking of everything in the world except Margaret, and thinking of

nothing else. It was a relief to Randal that her name was no longer on the lips of his uncongenial companion; but yet the silence brought in a more eager and painful wonder as to what he was going to do. But Randal could not renew the subject, and Rob did not. He went away early, without having once again referred to the matter which occupied both their thoughts.

He lived in a humble room in one of the streets which run from the Strand to the river—not an unpleasant place, for his window commanded the Thames; but it was a very long walk from Randal's hotel. He went slowly through the streets, through all the loitering crowds of the summer evening, which were no longer bustling and busy, but had an air of repose and enjoyment about them. Rob loitered too, but not from any sense of the pleasantness of the air, or the season. He had no one to care whether he came in or not, and it was easier to think, and think again, over this difficult question which must be decided one way or another, in the open air, than it was within-doors, shut up with a question which he had debated so often. If Margaret was weary of the bargain, if she shrank from him and avoided him, what should he do? One moment he thought of casting her off proudly, of showing her what he thought of her fickleness, and taunting her with her Englishman, "that fellow" who was always with her. This would have been the most consolatory to his feelings. But, on the other hand, to point out to her the cowardice, the dishonor of breaking her word, the strength of the pledge which she could not escape from, was better in another sense. Why should she be permitted to forsake him because she had changed her mind? What right had she to change her mind? Was it a less sin in a woman than in a man to break a promise, to think nothing of a vow? A man would not be allowed to escape scathless from such a perjury, why should a girl? And as he walked along the street, mortified, humbled, breathing forth fumes of anger and pain, there even gleamed before Rob's eyes the scrap of paper, the promise on which his mother counted, which was locked in the secretary in the farm-parlor. He had hated the vulgar sharpness which had exacted that promise from Margaret, he had scouted it as a means of keeping any hold upon her. But now, when he felt so strong a desire to punish her, such an eager, vindictive determination not to let her go free, even this came into his mind. Not to secure her by it—which was his mother's thought, but at least to punish her by it. He would send for it, he thought; he would keep it by him as a scourge, not as a compulsion. He would let all her friends see at least how far she had gone, how she had pledged herself, and how she was forsworn.

While he was pursuing these thoughts, loitering along through the soft summer night, jostled by the sauntering crowds who could not walk, even in the London streets, at that soft hour as they did during the day, his ear was suddenly caught by the intonations, so different from those around, the low-pitched, lingering vowels, and half chanting measure of his natural tongue. Not only Scotch but Fife were the sounds that reached his ears: now the heavy rolling bass of a man, then a softer voice. Good heavens! who was it? A tall, feeble-looking,

large-boned man, a trim little figure by his side, moving lightly and yet languidly, like her voice, which had caught Rob's ear by reason of something pathetic in it. The words she said were words of ordinary wonder and curiosity, such as became a country lass in the street of London; but the tone was sad and went to the heart, notwithstanding the little laugh with which it was sometimes interrupted. Was it possible? He turned round and followed them eagerly, growing more and more certain of their identity, scheming to get a glimpse of their faces, and make certainty sure. Jeanie! how came she here? He stepped forward as soon as he was certain of her, and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder. She started and turned round with a low cry. A gleam of delight came over her face. Her soft eyes lighted up with sudden warmth and gladness. It was the same change that had taken place on Margaret's face while Aubrey Bellingham—who was not the cause—watched it with disagreeable surprise; but this was warmer and more brilliant, more evanescent too; for Jeanie's countenance fell the next moment, and trouble, like a gray shadow, came over her face.

"Jeanie!" cried Rob, "how on earth have you come here? What has brought you here? Where are you staying? What are you going to do? I cannot believe my eyes!"

She stood trembling before him, unable to raise her eyes, overcome by the happiness of seeing him, the wretchedness of parting—a wretchedness which she thought, poor girl, she had eluded, with all the conflict of feeling it must have brought. She tried to speak, but she could only smile at him faintly, and begin to cry.

"Maister Glen," said her father, "you maun speak to me; Jeanie has had enough of fish and sorrow. We are on our way—to please her, no for ony wish of mine—on a lang voyage. We're strangers and pilgrims here in this muckle London, as I never realized the state before."

"On a long voyage!" Rob, though he had got through so much emotion one time and another, felt his heart stand still and a cold sensation of dismay steal over him. Had he not been keeping himself a refuge in Jeanie's heart, whatever might happen? He said, "This is a terrible surprise. I never thought you would have taken such a step as this, Jeanie, without letting me know."

"Maister Glen," said Jeanie, adopting her father's solemn mode of address, and hastily brushing the tears from her cheek, "wherever I gang, what's that to you?" Her voice was scarcely audible; he had half to guess at what she said.

"It is a great deal to me," he cried; "I never thought you would treat me so: going away without a word of warning, without saying good-bye, without letting me know you had any thought of it!"

A thrill of pain penetrated Rob's heart. It was half ludicrous, but he did not see anything ludicrous in it. They were both flying from him, one on either side, the two girls with whom his fate was woven—one for want of love, the other for too much love. Rob saw no humor in the position, but he felt the poignancy and sting of it piercing through and through his heart. Should he be abandoned altogether, then; left entirely alone, without any love at all? But his whole nature rose up fiercely against this. He

would not submit to it. If not one, then the other. "It cannot be, it cannot be. I will not let you go," he said.

"Maister Glen," said her father, "I canna rightly tell what has been between Jeanie and you. You're better off than she is in this world, and your friends might have reason to complain if you bound yourself to a poor cobbler's daughter. But this I ken, you have brought my Jeanie more trouble than pleasure. Gang your ways, my man, and let us gang ours. Jeanie, bid Mr. Glen farewell."

"I will say no farewell till I know more about it," he said. "Where are you staying? I must see more of you, I must hear all about it. We are old friends at least, John Robertson; you cannot deny me that."

"Old enough friends; but what o' that? It's no years, but kindness, that I look to. We're biding up west a bittie, with a decent woman from Cupar. I'm putting no force upon Jeanie to take her away. It's a' her ain doing; and if her and you have anything you want to say, I'll no forbid the saying of it; but I dinna advise thae last words and thae lang farewells," said John Robertson, shaking his head. Jeanie looked up at him wistfully, with a sad smile in her wet eyes.

"Let him come this ae night, faither—this ae night," she said, in her plaintive voice; "maist likely it will be the last."

CHAPTER XLIII.

RANDAL BURNSIDE was found at the station in the morning, though the train was an early one, to see the ladies away; which, as the travellers were only Margaret and Grace, and as this was one of the things impossible to Aubrey, who could not get up in the morning, was a kindness very much appreciated. It had finally been decided, after much consultation, that as nothing ever happened at the Grange, and as even Mr. St. John was absent, Grace might be sufficient guardian for Margaret for the few days longer which Mrs. Bellingham was compelled by her shopping to remain in town. There was Miss Parker, who would keep her right on one hand, and there was Bland, the most respectable of butlers, on the other, to guide her steps. So, with a flutter of mingled disappointment and exhilaration, Miss Leslie had assumed the charge of her young sister. It was a great relief to Grace's mind to see "a gentleman" at the station, ready to relieve her of all anxieties in respect to the luggage, and she thought it "a great attention" on his part. He was very useful, as she always said afterward. Not only did he secure them in a carriage in the very centre of the train (which was such a safeguard in case of accidents) and look after the luggage, but he waited till the very last moment, though it was wasting his time sadly; and young men, when they are in London only for a few days, really have no time, as Miss Grace knew. She smiled upon him most sweetly, and entreated him not to wait; but he kept his post; it was a great attention.

"And if you should want anything," Randal said, with great meaning, "I shall be in town,

at the Wrangham, for ten days longer." This was repeated as he stood with his hand upon the carriage door just before the train started.

"I am sure, Randal, we are very much obliged," said Miss Leslie; "but you see dear Jean is in town behind us, and she will do all our commissions, if there is anything wanted. Dearest Margaret and I will not want very much, and dear Jean knows about everything; but I am sure it is very kind of you, and a great attention—" And as the train was gliding away out of the station, she put out her head again to beg that he would give her very kind regards, when he saw them, to his dear papa and mamma.

Margaret's mind had been preoccupied with a dread of seeing some one else waiting to prevent her escape, and it was not till the train was in motion that she felt safe, and sufficiently relieved to wave her hand in answer to Randal's parting salutation. What a thing it is to be out of pain when you have been suffering, and out of anxiety when you have been racked with that torture! Margaret leaned back in the corner, feeling the relief to the bottom of her heart. And it was a beautiful day, the country still all bright with the green of the early summer. When they had got a little way out of town, the faint little shade of disappointment in Miss Leslie's mind over lost shopping and relinquished operas gave way to a sense of unusual exhilaration in being her own mistress, and even more than that, having an important trust in her hands.

"After all," she said, "dearest Margaret, I think it will be very nice to get back to the country, though dear Jean always says a week or two in town is very reviving at this time of the year; but you must not think I am unhappy about coming away, for I really do not mind it *much*—nothing at all to speak of. I shall always say it was a great attention on the part of Randal Burnside, and I am sure dear Jean will feel it. But how could he think we should want him, or anything he could do for us, when dear Jean is in town? Did you hear him give me his address, dearest Margaret? He said he would be at the Wrangham for ten days more. My word, but that must cost him a pretty penny! The Burnsides must be very well off, when Randal can afford to live at the Wrangham, for it cannot be expected that he can be getting much by his profession yet. We once went to the Wrangham ourselves, but it was too expensive. I think you never go there without finding some Fife person or other. I wonder how they have got their Fife connection. But it amuses me to think that Randal Burnside should give us his address."

Margaret listened to this monologue with but slight attention; neither did she attach any importance to Randal's parting words. She was languid in the great relief of her mind, and quite content to rest in her corner, and listen to Grace's soft ripple of talk, which flowed only with a fullness most delightful to herself, the speaker, who had not for many a long day had such an opportunity of expressing, uninterrupted, her gentle sentiments. She was pleased with her companion, who neither interrupted, nor contradicted, nor did anything but contribute a monosyllable now and then, such as was necessary to carry on what Grace called the conversation. The

Grange was as bright and sweet to the eyes when they got there, as it had been dark and melancholy on their first arrival. Everything was beginning to bloom—the early roses on the walls, the starry blossoms of the little mountain clematis threading along the old dark-red wall, the honeysuckle preparing its big blooms, and the garden borders gay with flowers.

Miss Parker met them smiling upon the steps, and all the servants of the household, which Jean had organized liberally, courtesying behind her, while Bland, as affable as his name, with his own hands opened the carriage door. And to be consulted about everything was very delightful to Miss Leslie. She seized the opportunity to make a few little changes in the garden, which she had long set her heart upon, and even corrected one or two things in-doors, which she had not ventured to touch before. And she wrote to dearest Jean that Miss Parker was very kind, and studied their comfort in every way, and that Cook was behaving very well indeed, and Bland was *most* attentive. All her report was thoroughly satisfactory; and she could not help expressing a hope that dearest Jean would not hurry, but would enjoy herself. And Miss Leslie found Margaret a very pleasant companion, giving "no trouble," and ready to listen for the whole day, if her sister pleased, and Grace was very well pleased to go on. She was very well pleased, too, to go on in her vicereignty, and very liberal to the old women in the cottages, where Margaret and she paid a great many kindly visits. And, in short, Miss Leslie's feelings were of the most comfortable kind, and her rule, though probably it would have been much less successful in the long-run, and consequently less popular, was for a time, to all the dependants who were permitted to have their own way, a very delightful sway in comparison with that of her sister; and it was very pleasant to herself to be looked up to, more or less, instead of being looked down upon.

"I was always fond of you, dearest Margaret, but I never did you full justice till now," she said, half crying, as it was so natural for her to do when she was moved either happily or otherwise. Dear Jean, no doubt, was a great loss; but then dear Jean was enjoying herself too. Thus the beginning of this exile and retreat was very pleasant to both the ladies; and Margaret, with her expanded being, took real possession—with a sense of security and calm which sank into her heart like a benediction—of her own house.

On the third day after their arrival she had gone out into the park alone. It was the afternoon, and very bright and warm—too warm, Grace thought, for walking; but Margaret, in all the ardor of her young strength, found nothing too cold or too hot. She strayed across the park in the full sunshine: her broad straw hat was shade enough, and the long, black gauze veil, which Jean still insisted upon, hung floating behind her. Her dress, though black, was thin and light. She had recovered all the soft splendor of health, though in Margaret it could scarcely be called bloom or glow. A faint rose-tint like the flowers, as delicate and as sweet, was on her cheek going and coming; she had a book clasped under her arm, but she was not at all sure that she meant to read. She made her way through the blaze of the sunshine, defying

it, as foolish girls do, to the clump of trees where she had rushed, in her despair, to read Rob Glen's letter on the wet wintry day when she had caught her illness.

Without premeditation she had started for this shelter; but as she gained the shade and sat down at the foot of the great elm, the whole scene came back to her. Her heart woke, and seemed to echo the frantic beating which had been in it then. What a difference! Winter then, all weeping and dreary; yellow leaves scattered on the grass, naked branches waving in the dank air, against the mud-colored clouds; now nothing but summer—the grass covered with flickering gleams of gold and soft masses of grateful shade, the sky so blue and the leaves so green; and, what was more wonderful still, her heart then so agitated and miserable, now so tranquil and calm. Yes, she said to herself, with a little tremor, but why should she be so tranquil and calm? Nothing was changed; three days ago she had dashed through the London streets in the same frantic flight and horror. Nothing was changed. What did the distance matter, a hundred miles or a thousand, when in fact and reality everything was the same? And distance could not settle it one way or another: running away could not settle it. By word or by letter, must she not make up her mind to do it—absolutely to meet the difficulty herself, to confront the danger, not to run away?

Her book dropped down upon the warm, delicious turf beside her. In any case this, in all likelihood, would have been its fate; but it fell from her hand now with a kind of violence. Yes! it must be settled—not by running away—it must be done somehow, beyond all chance of undoing. Margaret was a child no longer: she had learned at least the rudiments of that great lesson; she had found that those evils which we have brought on ourselves cannot be undone by chance or good-fortune. If she was to reclaim herself, it must be by a conscious struggle and effort; and how was it possible that she could encounter this boldly, forestall the next danger, go out to meet the trouble? If he would but leave her alone, it would not matter so much. She thought she could thrust it away from her and be happy—too grateful to let the days drift by, to enjoy her life till the inevitable moment when the long-dreaded fate must come; and then—?

Margaret's heart began once more to sing wildly in her ears. Then! What was it she must do? She was not as she had been a year ago, when nothing but a frightened acquiescence, compulsion yet submission, to something against which there seemed no possibility of effectual resistance, a dreadful fate which she must make the best of when it came, seemed before her. Now she could no longer contemplate the future so; she would not be passive, but must act, must make some effort for her own emancipation: but not yet! not yet! her fluttering heart seemed to say: though something sterner in her, something stronger, protested and held another strain. "If 'twere done, when 'tis done, then it were well it were done quickly." If a struggle was inevitable, one desperate effort must be made to get herself free, why should she delay and suffer so many agonies in the mean time?

A flutter of daring, a sinking of despair, com-

bated in her: and then arose the horrible question—If she did summon courage enough to parley with her fate and ask for her freedom, would he grant it? She had not come so far as to think anything was possible without his consent. Would he let her go free? If she could but dare to tell him that she did not love him, that it was all a mistake, would he believe her, and be persuaded, and let her go? Awful question to which it was impossible to give an answer. Margaret felt like a criminal dependent on the clemency of a monarch, before whom she could only kneel, and weep, and pray. Would he hear her? Would he waive his claims—the claims which she could not deny—and let her go free?

When she was in the midst of these thoughts, too much engrossed to heed what might be going on round her, and secure that here nothing could be going on, the creaking of a branch, as under a footstep, caught Margaret's ear. She looked up, but saw nothing to alarm her, and with that curious deliverance from all fears or suspicions, and simplicity of trust which is apt to precede a catastrophe, returned to her fancies and questions and took no further notice. What harm could come near her there? She was in the middle of the park, in an island of shade in the midst of the blaze of sunshine, out of sight of the house, out of reach of the gate, a place shut up and sacred, where no one interfered with the freedom of the young mistress of all. It might be a squirrel, it might be a rabbit; what could it be else? She did not even go so far as to ask herself what it was; there was not the break of a moment in her thoughts. Would he let her free? Her word was pledged to him. How could she release herself from that solemn promise? He was her master by reason of this pledge. Would he be merciful? would he have pity upon her? would he set her free?

What was that? A voice: "Margaret!" She seemed to hear it somehow before it really sounded, so that when the word was uttered it felt like a repetition. She looked up with a sudden cry. The voice was close over her head, and the very air seemed to tremble with it—repeating it, "Margaret!" She sprang to her feet with a wild impulse of flight, requiring no second glance, no second hearing, to tell her that the moment of fate had come. She had even made one hurrying, flying step, with terror in her looks, her throat suddenly dry and gasping, her strength and courage gone. Was it he? what was it that caught at her dress? She darted away in terror indescribable; but just as she did so all the desperation of her case flashed upon Margaret. She stopped, and, turning round, looked him in the face.

There he stood looking at her, leaning against the tree, holding out his hands—"Margaret!" he cried. His face was all glowing and moving with emotion—unquestionably with genuine emotion. No cheat ever got by guile such an expression into his lying face. Rob was not lying. There was great emotion in his mind. He who could not look at a girl without trying to please her felt his first glance at Margaret reillumine all the first fire of loving in his heart. He had never seen her look half so beautiful. The health that was in her cheeks, the development that had come to her whole being, all tend-

ed to make her fairer; and even the improvement of her dress under her sister's careful supervision increased her charm to Rob. He was keenly alive to all those signs of ladyhood which separated Margaret from his own sphere, and which proved not only her superiority, but his who loved her. She shone upon him like a new revelation of beauty and grace, tempting in herself—irresistible in that she was so much above him. But if she had not been at all above him, Rob still would not have let her go without the most strenuous effort to retain her. His face shone with the very enthusiasm of admiration and happiness. "Margaret! my beautiful darling!" he cried; and he held out his hands, inviting, wooing her to him. "Do not be afraid of me," he said, with real pathos in his voice. "Margaret! I will not come a step nearer till you give me leave—to look at you seems happiness enough."

Oh, what a reproach that look was to the poor girl, who, frightened and desperate, had yet intelligence enough left to see that there was no safety in flight! Happiness enough to look at her! while she—she, ungrateful—she, hard-hearted, shrunk from the sight of him! She could not bear the delight and the petition in his eyes. Instead of being a supplicant to him for her freedom, it was he who, for his happiness, was a supplicant to her.

"Oh, do not speak so," she said, wringing her hands; "do not speak so well of me—I do not deserve it. Oh, why have you come here?"

"Why should I have come? To see you, my only love. How do you suppose I could keep away from you? Margaret, do you think I am made of stone? do you think I only pretend to love you? You did not think so once at Earl's-hall," he said, coming very softly a step nearer to her. His look was wistful, his voice so soft that Margaret's heart was pierced with a thousand compunctions. She shrank, without venturing to step farther back, bending her pliant, slight young figure away from him; and thus he got her hand before she was aware. Margaret shrank still farther from his touch, her whole frame contracting; but the instinct of constancy and the sense of guilt were too much for her. She could not withdraw her hand.

"Oh, Mr. Glen," she said—"oh, Rob," for he gave her a startled look of wonder and pain, "what can I say to you? I do not want to be unkind, and oh, I hope—I hope you don't care so much, not so very much! Oh," she cried, breaking out suddenly into the appeal she had premeditated, "don't you think we have made a mistake—a great mistake?"

"What mistake, Margaret? Is it because you are so much richer than we ever thought, and I so poor? Yes, it was a mistake. I had no right to lift my hopes so high. But do you think I remembered that? It was you I was thinking of—not what you had!"

"What does it matter what I have?" she said, sadly. "Do you think that was what I was thinking of? Rich or poor, has that anything to do with it? But oh, it is true—I cannot help it—we have made a mistake."

"I have made no mistake," he said; "I thought you the sweetest and the fairest creature that ever crossed my path, and so you are.

And I loved you, Margaret, and so I do now. A king could not do more. I have not made any mistake."

"Oh!" she cried, with a shiver of desperation running through her, drawing her hand from his, "you may scorn me, you may despise me, but I must say it. It is I, then. Oh, Rob, do not be angry! You have been kind, very kind, as good as an angel to me; but I—I am ungrateful, I have no heart. I cannot, cannot—" Here Margaret, entirely overcome, broke forth into sudden weeping, and covered her face with her hands.

Then he took the step too far, which was all that was wanted. How could he tell it was too far? He would have done it had she been no beautiful lady at all, but a country girl who had been once fond of him, whom he could not allow to escape. He put his arm tenderly round her, and tried to draw her toward him.

Margaret sprang from his side with a quick cry, putting him away with her hands. "Oh no, no, no!" she cried, "that cannot be, that can never be! Do not touch me; do not come near me, Mr. Glen!"

"Margaret!" his tone was full of astonishment and pain; "what does this mean? It seems like a bad dream. It cannot be you that are speaking to me."

And then there was a pause. She could say nothing, her very breathing was choked by the struggling sobs. Oh, how cruel she was, how barbarous, how guilty! And he so tender, so struck with wonder and dismay, gazing at her with eyes full of surprise and sudden misery! Would it not have been better to bear anything, to put up with anything, rather than inflict such cruel pain?

It was Rob who was the first to speak. There was no make-believe in him; it was indeed cruel pain, bitter to his heart and to his self-love. He was mortified and wounded beyond measure. He could not understand how he could be repulsed so. "If this is true," he said, "if it is not some nightmare—if I am not dreaming—what is to become of me? My God! the girl I love, without whom I don't care for my life, my betrothed, my wife that was to be, tells me not to come near her, not to touch her! What does it mean—what does it mean, Margaret? You have been hearing something of me that is false, some slander, some ill stories—"

"No, no! oh no, no! not that, not a word."

"Then what is it, Margaret? If you have any pity, tell me what it is. I have done something to displease you. I have offended you, though Heaven knows I would sooner offend the whole world."

"It is not that: oh, can you not understand, will you not understand? I was so young. I did not know what it meant. Oh, forgive me, Mr. Glen. It is not that I want to be unkind. My heart is broken too. I was never—oh, how can I say it?—I was never—never—but do not be angry!—never so—fond of you as you thought."

She raised her eyes to him as the dreadful truth was said, with the awed and troubled gaze of a child, not knowing what horror of suffering she might see, or what denunciation might blast her where she stood. But Margaret was not prepared for something which was much more difficult to encounter. He listened to her, and a smile came over his face.

"My darling," he said, softly, "never mind; I have love enough for the two of us. We have been parted for a long time, and you have forgotten what you thought once. I think I know better, dear, than you. I was content, and so shall I be again, and quite happy when all these cobwebs are blown away. I will take my chance that you will be fond of me," he said.

This was a turn of the tables for which she was absolutely unprepared. She could do nothing but gaze at him blankly, not finding a single word to reply.

"And you shall be humored, my darling," he said. "I am not such a clown as you think. Do you suppose I don't understand your delicacy, your shyness, my Lady Margaret? Oh, I am not such a clown as you think. I will wait till you give me that dear little hand again. I will be patient till you come to my arms again. Oh no, I will not hurry you, darling. I will wait for you; but you must not ask me," he cried, "you must not expect me, to give up my betrothed wife."

"Dearest Margaret," said another voice behind, which made Margaret start, "I have been looking for you everywhere. Here is a letter from dearest Jean, saying that dear Ludovic is in town, and that she will bring him with her when she comes. Is this gentleman a friend of yours, darling Margaret? You must introduce him to me," Miss Grace said.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MISS LESLIE was hospitality itself. This national virtue belonged to all the Leslies, even when they had little means of exercising it; and it was intensified in Grace's case by the fact that she had so seldom any power of independent action. She was like a school-girl suddenly placed at the head of a household, and made absolute mistress in a place where hitherto even her personal freedom had been limited. And the pleasure of making a new acquaintance was doubled by the consciousness that there was no brisk ruler behind her to limit her kindness to the stranger. She insisted that he should come to dinner that evening, since she heard that he was staying in the village. "Of course dear Margaret will like to be able to talk to you about home," she said. It was not often that she had the opportunity of entertaining any one; and though Rob, to do him justice, hesitated for a moment, feeling that his acceptance of the unlooked-for opportunity should depend upon Margaret, still it was scarcely to be expected that he could refuse an invitation so manifestly advantageous to him. Margaret said nothing. She would not reply to his look. She gave Grace a glance of mingled horror and entreaty; but Grace scarcely noticed this, and did not understand it. Margaret walked silently by their side to the house, as if in a dream. She heard them talk, the voices coming to her as through a mist of excitement and pain; but what could she do? When Grace suggested that she should show Mr. Glen the house, she shrank away and declared that she was tired, and was going to her room to rest; but the only result of her defection was, that Grace herself took the part of cicerone, and that

Margaret, shutting herself up in her room, heard them going up and down stairs, Grace's voice leading the way, as Mrs. Bellingham's had done on the first night of their arrival.

"Dearest Margaret, do you know you are almost rude to Mr. Glen?" her sister said, before dinner; "and such a pleasant young man, and so clever and so agreeable. I am sure dear Jean will think him quite an acquisition."

"I hate him!" cried Margaret, with the fervor of despair. When she heard the words which she had uttered in her impatience, a chill of horror came over her. Was it true that she hated him, to whom she was bound by her promise, who loved her and expected her to love him? She went away to the other end of the room, pretending to look for something, and shed a few hot and bitter tears. It was horrible, but in the passion of the moment it seemed true. What was she to do to deliver herself?

"I don't want to see him," she said, coming back, "and Jean would not like to have him here: I know she would not like to have him here."

"You will forgive me, darling Margaret," said Miss Leslie, "but I think I know what dear Jean would like: she would not neglect a stranger. She is always very kind to strangers. How do you do again, Mr. Glen?"

And the evening that followed was dreadful to Margaret. Grace, who liked to study what her companions would like, made a great many little efforts to bring these two together. "They will like to have a little talk," she said, running up-stairs to consult Miss Parker about something imaginary. "They are old friends, and they will like to have a little talk."

Margaret, thus left alone with Rob, grew desperate. She turned to him with a pale face and flashing eyes, taking the initiative for the first time.

"Oh, why did you come?" she cried; "do you think it is like a man to drive a poor girl wild—when I told you that I wanted you to go away? that it was all a mistake—all a mistake!"

"It was no mistake so far as I am concerned," he said. "Margaret, you have given me your hand and your promise; how can you be so cruel as to deny me your heart now?"

"I did not give you anything; I was distracted. I did not know what you were saying," she said; "I did not give you anything. Whatever there was, you took. It was not I—it was not I!"

"Margaret, my darling!" he said, coming close to her, "you cannot mean to be so unkind. Do not let us spend all these precious moments in quarrelling. Will you let me tell her when she comes back?"

Margaret's voice seemed to fail in her throat, and a wild panic came into her eyes. She was afraid of his vicinity; she could not bear any appearance of intimacy, any betrayal of their previous relations. And just then Miss Grace came back, profuse in apologies.

"I had something to say to the house-keeper, Mr. Glen. I thought that dear Margaret, as an old friend, would be able to entertain you for a little while, for I heard you were old friends."

"From our cradles, I think," said Rob, significantly. "Miss Margaret used to go fishing with me when I was a boy, and she a tiny little

fairy, whom I thought the most wonderful creature on earth. There are traditions of childhood to which one holds all one's life."

"Ah!" said Grace, "childish friendships are very sweet. At dear Margaret's age they are sometimes not so much appreciated; but as one grows older, one understands the value of them. Are you going to stay for some time in our village, Mr. Glen? And are you making some pretty sketches? That was beautiful, that one of Earl's-hall, that you sent to dear Margaret. Dearest Jean was so much struck by it. I am sure it is a great gift to be able to give so much pleasure."

"I will make a companion sketch of the Grange for you, if you would like it," said Rob; "nothing would give me more pleasure. It is a beautiful old house."

"Oh, Mr. Glen! But you are a great deal too good—much too good! And how could I ever repay—how could I ever thank you!"

Margaret rushed from the room while these compliments were being exchanged. It seemed to her like a scene from some old play which she had seen played before, save that the interest was too sharp and intense, too close to herself, for any play. She felt herself insulted and defied, provoked and wounded. What did he care for her or her feelings? Had he felt the least real consideration for her, he could not have done it. She rushed up the half-lighted stairs to her room, with passion throbbing in her heart. Oh, that Jean were here to send him away! though there was, in reality, nobody whom Margaret was more alarmed for than Jean. Oh, that there was some one whom she could trust in—whom she might dare to speak to! But to whom could she speak? If she did betray this secret, would not she be thought badly of, as of a girl who was not a good girl? How well she remembered the sense of humiliation which had come over her when Randal Burnside took no notice of her presence, and did not even take off his hat! Randal Burnside! The name seemed to go through and through her, tingling in every vein. Ah! was it because of this that he had looked at her so wistfully, when he put her into the railway-carriage, to warn her perhaps of what was coming? Could it be for this that he had told Grace where he was to be found?

The breath seemed to stop on Margaret's lips when this idea occurred to her. She had appealed to Randal before, in her despair, and Randal had helped her; should she appeal to him again? There was a moment's confusion in her brain, everything going round with her, a sound of ringing in her ears. What right had she to call upon Randal? But yet she knew that Randal would reply to her appeal; he would do what he could for her; he would not betray, and, above all, he would not blame her. That was a great deal to say, but it was true. Perhaps (she thought) he would be more sorry than any one else in the world; but he would not blame her. The only other person who *knew* was Ludovic; but to Ludovic she dared not appeal. He would think it was all her own fault; but Randal would not think it was her fault. He would *understand*. She stood for a moment undecided, feeling that she must do something at once, that there was no time to lose; and then

she made a sudden dash at her writing-table, scattering the papers on it, in her confusion. She must not think any longer; she must do something, whatever it might be. And how could she write an ordinary letter in such a crisis, with an ordinary beginning and ending, as if there was nothing in it out of the common? She plunged at it, putting nothing but what she was obliged to say.

"He has come here, and I don't know what to do. Oh, could you get him to leave me in peace, as you did before? I have no right to trouble you; but if you have any power over him, oh, will you help me? will you get him to go away? I know I ought not to write to you about this; but I am very unhappy, and who can I go to? Oh, Randal, if you have any power over him, get him to go away!"

At first she did not sign this at all; then she reflected that he might not know her handwriting, though she knew his. And then she signed it timidly with an M. L. But perhaps he might not know who M. L. was; other names began with the same letters. At last she wrote, very tremulously, her whole name, the Leslie dying into illegibility. She did not, however, think it necessary to carry this herself to the post-office, as she had done the letter to Bell. Grace was not so alarming as Jean, and the post-bag was safe enough, she felt. When she had thus stretched out her hand for help, Margaret was guilty of the first act of positive rebellion she had ever ventured upon. She refused to go downstairs. The maid who took her message said, apologetically, that she had a headache; but Margaret herself made no such pretence. She could not keep up any fiction of gentle disability when the crisis was coming so near. And though she shrank from confiding her griefs to any one, the girl, in her desperation, felt that the moment was coming in which, if need were, she would have strength to defy all the world.

All was dark in Margaret's room, when Grace, having parted from her visitor, who had done his very best to be amusing, notwithstanding the unsatisfactory circumstances, came softly into her little sister's room and bent over the bed.

"Poor darling!" Miss Leslie said, "how provoking, just when your old friend was here. But he is coming again, dearest Margaret, to-morrow, to begin his sketch. How nice of him to offer to make a sketch—and for me! I never knew anything so kind; for he scarcely knows me."

Thus fate made another coil round her helpless feet.

As for Rob, he went back to the inn in the village scarcely less disturbed than Margaret. He had come to a new chapter in his history. Her coldness, her manifest terror of him, her flight from the room in which he was, provoked him to the utmost. He was less cast down than exasperated by her desire to avoid him. He was not a man, he said to himself, from whom girls generally desired to escape, nor was he one with whom they could play fast and loose. He had not been used to failure. Jeanie, who had a hundred times more reason to be dissatisfied with him than Margaret could have, had been won over by his pleading even at the last mo-

ment, and was waiting now in London for the last interview, which he had insisted upon. And did Margaret think herself so much better than everybody else that *she* was to continue to fly from him? He was determined to subdue her. She should not cast him off when she pleased, or escape from her word. In the fervor of his feelings he forgot even his own horror at the vulgar expedient his mother had contrived, to bind the girl more effectually. Even that he had made up his mind to use, if need were, to hold as a whip over her. It was no fault of his, but entirely her own fault, if he was thus driven to use every weapon in his armory. He had written to his mother to send it to him before he came to the village, and now expected it every day. Perhaps to-morrow, before he set out for the Grange, it would arrive, and Margaret would see he was not to be trifled with. All this did not make him cease to be "in love with" her. He was prepared to be as fond, nay, more fond than ever, if she would but respond as she ought. No one had ever so used him before, and he would not be beaten by a slip of a girl. If he could not win her back as he had won Jeanie, then he would force her back. She should not beat him. Thus the struggle between them, which had been existing passive and unacknowledged for some time back, had to his consciousness, as well as Margaret's, come to a crisis now.

Next morning she kept out of the way, remaining in her own room, though without any pretence of illness. Margaret was too highly strung, too sensible of the greatness of the emergency, to take refuge in that headache which is always so convenient an excuse; she would not set up such a feeble plea. She kept up-stairs in her room in so great a fever of mental excitement that she seemed to hear and see and feel everything that happened, notwithstanding her withdrawal. She heard him arrive, and she heard Grace's twitterings of welcome; and then she heard the voices outside again, moving about, and divined that they were in search of the best point of view. They found it at last, in sight of Margaret's window, where Rob established himself and all his paraphernalia fully in her view. It was for this reason, indeed, that he had chosen the spot, meaning, with one of his curious failures of perception, to touch her heart by the familiar sight, and call her back to him by the recollection of those early days at Earl's-hall.

The attempt exasperated her; it was like the repetition of a familiar trick—the sort of thing he did everywhere. She looked out from behind the curtain with dislike and annoyance which increased every moment. It seemed incredible to her, as she looked out upon him, how she could ever have regarded him as she knew she had once done. All that was commonplace in him, lightly veiled by his cleverness, his skill, his desire to please, appeared now to her disenchanting eyes. The thought that he should ever have addressed her in the tenderest words that one human creature can use to another; that he should ever have held her close to him and kissed her, made her cheek burn, and her very veins fill and swell with shame. But, notwithstanding all her reluctance, she had to go down to luncheon, partly compelled by circumstances, partly by the strange attraction of hostility, and partly by the distress of Grace at the possibility

of having to take her lunch "alone with a gentleman!" Margaret went down; but she kept herself aloof, sitting up stately and silent, all unlike her girlish self, at the table, where Miss Leslie did the honors with anxious hospitality, pressing her guest to eat, and, happily, leaving no room for any words but her own. Grace, however, was too anxious that the young people should enjoy themselves, not to perceive how very little intercourse there was between them, and, after vain attempts to induce Margaret to show Mr. Glen the wainscot parlor, she adopted the old expedient of running out of the room and leaving them together as soon as their meal was over.

"I must just speak to Bland," she said, hurriedly, "I shall not be a moment. Margaret, you will take care of Mr. Glen till I come back."

Margaret, who was herself in the very act of flight, was obliged to stay. She rose from her chair and stood stiffly by it, while Grace ran along the passage. Her heart had begun to beat so loudly that she could scarcely speak, but speak she must; and before the sound of her sister's footsteps had died out of hearing, she turned upon the companion she had accepted so reluctantly, with breathless excitement.

"Mr. Glen," she said, trembling, "I must speak to you. We cannot go on like this. Oh, why will you not go away? If you will not go away, I must. I will not see you again; I cannot, I cannot do it. For God's sake go away!"

"Why should you be so urgent, Margaret?" he said. "What harm am I doing? It is hard enough to consent to see so little of you; but even a little is better than nothing at all."

"Oh!" she cried, in her desperation, "do not stop to argue about it. Don't you see—but you must see—that you are making me miserable? If there is anything you want, tell me; but oh, do not stay here!"

"What I want is easily enough divined. I want *you*, Margaret," he said; "and why should you turn me away? Let us not spend the little time we have together in quarrelling. You are offended about something. Somebody has been speaking ill of me—"

"No one has been speaking ill of you," she cried, indignantly. "Oh, Mr. Glen, even if I liked you to be here, it would be dishonorable to come when my sister Jean was away, and to impose upon poor Grace, who knows nothing, who does not understand—"

"Let me tell her," he said, eagerly; "she will be a friend to us; she is kind-hearted. Let me tell her. It is not I that wish for concealment; I should like the whole world to know. I will go and tell her—"

"No!" Margaret cried, almost with a scream of terror. She stopped him as he made a step toward the door. "What would you tell her, or any one?—that I—care for you, Mr. Glen? Oh, listen to me! It is not that I have deceived you, for I never said anything; I only let you speak—But if I have done wrong, I am very sorry; if you told her that, it would not be true!"

"Margaret," he said, with forced calmness, "take care what you are saying. Do you forget that you are my promised wife? Is that nothing to tell her? Do you think that I will let you break your vow without a word. There is more than love concerned, more than caring

for each other, as you call it—there is our whole life!"

"Yes," she said. Her voice sank to a whisper, in her extreme emotion; her face grew pallid, as if she were going to faint. She clasped her hands together and looked at him piteously, with wide-open eyes. "Yes," she said, "I know; I promised, and I am false to it. Oh, will you forgive me, and let me go free? Oh, Mr. Glen, let me go free!"

"Is this all I have for my love?" he said, with not unnatural exasperation. "Let you go free! that is all you care for. What I feel is nothing to you; my hopes, and my prospects, and my happiness—"

Margaret could not speak. She made a supplicating gesture with her clasped hands, and kept her eyes fixed upon him. Rob did not know what to do. He paced up and down the room in unfeigned agitation; outraged pride and disappointed feeling, and an impulse which was half generosity and half mortification tempting him on one side, while the rage of failure and the force of self-interest held him fast on the other. He could not give up so much without another struggle. He made a hasty step toward her and caught her hands in his.

"Margaret!" he cried, "how can I give you up? This hand is mine, and I will not let it go. Is there nothing in your promise—nothing in the love that has been between us? Let you go free? Is that all the question that remains between you and me?"

They stood thus, making a mutual appeal to each other, he holding her hand, she endeavoring to draw it away, when the sound of a steady and solemn step startled them suddenly.

"If you please, miss," said Bland, at the door, "there is a gentleman in the hall asking for Mr. Glen; and there is a person as says she's just come off a journey, and wants Mr. Glen too. Shall I show them into the library, or shall I bring them here?"

Rob had dropped her hand hastily at the first sound of Bland's appearance; and Margaret, scarcely knowing what she did, her head swimming, her heart throbbing, struggled back into a kind of artificial consciousness by means of this sudden return of the commonplace and ordinary, though she was scarcely aware what the man said.

"I am coming," she answered, faintly; the singing in her ears sounded like an echo of voices calling her. All the world seemed calling her, assembling to the crisis of her fate. She did not so much as look at Rob, from whom she was thus liberated all at once, but turned and followed Bland with all the speed and quiet of great excitement, feeling herself carried along almost without any will of hers.

The hall at the Grange was a sight to see, that brilliant summer day. The door was wide open, framing a picture of blue sky and flowering shrubs at one end; and the sunshine, which poured in through the south window, caught the wainscot panels and the bits of old armor, converting them into dull yet magical mirrors full of confused reflections. There were two strangers standing here, as far apart as the space would allow, both full of excitement to find themselves there, and each full of wonder to find the other. They both turned toward Margaret

as she came in, pale as a ghost in her black dress. Her eye was first caught by him who had come at her call, her only confidant, the friend in whom she had most perfect trust. The sight of him woke her out of her abstraction of terror and helplessness.

"Randal!" she cried, with a gleam of hope and pleasure lighting up her face.

Then she stopped short and paled again, with a horrible relapse into her former panic. Her voice changed into that pitiful "oh!" of wonder and consternation, which the sight of a mortal passenger called forth, as Dante tells us, from the spirits in purgatory. The second stranger was a woman; no other than Mrs. Glen, from Earl's-lee, in her best clothes, with a warm Paisley shawl enveloping her substantial person, who stood fanning herself with a large white handkerchief in the only shady corner. These were the two seconds whom, half consciously, half willingly, yet in one case not consciously or willingly at all, the two chief belligerents in this strange duel had summoned to their aid.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE strangers made their salutations very briefly; as for Randal, he did not approach Margaret at all. He made her a somewhat stiff bow, which once more, in her simplicity, wounded her, though the sight of him was such a relief; but even the comfort she had in his presence was sadly neutralized by this apparent evidence that he did not think so charitably of her as she had hoped. Amidst all the pain and bewilderment of the moment, it was a pang the more to feel thus driven back upon herself by Randal's disapproval. She gave him an anxious, questioning look, but he only bowed, looking beyond her at Rob Glen; and it was Mrs. Glen who hurried forward with demonstration to take and shake between both her own Margaret's reluctant hand.

"Eh, but I'm glad to see you, Miss Margret!" Mrs. Glen said. "What a heat! I thought I would be melted, coming from the station, but a's weel, now I'm safe here."

"Will you forgive me, Miss Leslie," said Randal, "if I ask leave to speak to Glen on business? I took the liberty of coming when I heard he was here. I should not have ventured to disturb you but for urgent business. Glen, I have heard of something that may be of great importance to you. Will you walk back with me to the station, and let me tell you what it is? I have not a moment to spare."

"Na, na, ye'll gang wi' nobody to the station. How's a' with ye, Rob, my man?" cried Mrs. Glen; "you're no going to leave me the first moment I'm here?"

Rob stood and gazed, first at one, then at the other. The conjunction did not seem to bode him any good, though he did not know how it could harm him. He looked at them as if they had dropped from the clouds, and a dull sense that his path was suddenly obstructed, and that he was being hemmed in by friends as well as by foes, came over him. "What do you want?" he said, hoarsely. The question was addressed chiefly to his mother, to whom he could relieve

himself by a savage tone not to be endured by any stranger.

"Me?" said Mrs. Glen; "I want nothing but a kindly welcome from you and your bonnie young lady; that's a' I'm wanting. But I couldna trust you until a letter," she added, in a lower tone—"I thought it was a great deal safer just to bring it myself."

"But I," said Randal, quickly, "have come upon business, Glen. Miss Leslie will excuse me for bringing it here, though I had not meant to do so. I have a very advantageous offer to tell you of. It was made to me, but it will suit you better. There is pleasant work and good pay, and a good opening. Could you not put off this happy meeting for a little, and listen to what I have to say?"

"Good pay, and a good opening? Rob, my man," said Mrs. Glen, "leave you me with Miss Margret—we were aye real good friends—and listen like a good lad to what Mr. Randal says. A good opening, and good pay—eh! but you're a kind lad when there's good going no to keep it to yourself."

"If Glen will not give me his attention, I may be tempted to keep it to myself," said Randal, with a smile—"and there is not a moment to lose." He had meant what he said when he pledged himself to serve her, to do anything for her that his power could reach. Nobody but himself knew what a sacrifice it was that he was prepared to make. And there was not a moment to lose. It was evident by the look of all parties, and by the unexplained appearance of Mrs. Glen, that the crisis was even more alarming, more urgent than he thought. The only thing he could do was to insist upon the prior urgency of *his* business. Could he but get Rob away! Randal knew that Margaret's natural protectors were on the way to take charge of her: he made another anxious appeal. "Pardon me if I have no time for explanations or apologies," he said; "you may see how important it is, when I have come from London to tell you of it. Glen, you ought not to neglect such an opportunity. Miss Leslie will excuse you—it may make your fortune. Won't you come with me, and let me tell you? I can't explain everything here—"

"Eh, Rob," said Mrs. Glen, who had pressed forward anxiously to listen. "What's half an hour, one way or another? I would gang with him, and I would hear what he's got to say. We're none so pressed for time, you and me. What's half an hour? and me and your bonnie Miss Margret will have our cracks till ye come back. Gang away, my man, gang away!"

Rob stood undecided between them, looking from one to another, distrusting them all, even his mother. Why had she come here? They seemed all in a plot to get him away from this spot, where alone (he thought) he could insist upon his rights. "How did he know I was here?" he said, between his teeth.

As for Margaret, everything was in a confusion about her. She did not comprehend why Randal should stand there without a word to her, scarcely looking at her. Was this the way to serve her? And yet was it not for her sake that he was trying to take the other claimant—this too urgent suitor—away? As she stood there, passive, confused, and wondering, Margaret,

standing with her face to the door, was the first to perceive, all at once detaching themselves from the background of the sky, two figures outside, whose appearance brought a climax to all the confusion within. In the pause within-doors, while they all waited to see what Rob would do, a brisk voice outside suddenly took up and occupied the silence:

"I think most likely they don't expect us at all. You never can be sure of Grace. Her very letters go astray as other people's letters never do. The post itself goes wrong with her. If they had expected me, they would have sent the carriage. But I declare, there are people in the hall! I wonder," said Mrs. Bellingham, in a tone of wonder, not unmingled with indignation, "if they have been having visitors—*visitors*, Grace and Margaret, while I have been away?"

No one said a word. Randal, who had been standing with his back to the door, turned round hastily, and the others stood startled, not knowing what was about to happen, but with a consciousness that the end of all things was drawing near. Mrs. Bellingham marched in, with mingled curiosity and resolution in her face. She came in, as the head of a house had a right to come, into a place where very high jinks had been enacted in his or her absence. She looked curiously at Rob Glen and his mother, who faced her first, and said "Oh!" with a slight swing of her person—a half bow, a half courtesy, less of courtesy than suspicion; but Jean was always aware what was due to herself, and could not be rude. When the third stranger caught her eye, she gave way to a little outcry of genuine surprise—"You here, Randal Burnside!"

"Yes, indeed," he said. "You must think it very strange; but I will explain everything to you afterward."

"Oh, I am sure there is no need for explanations; your father's son can never be unwelcome," said Mrs. Bellingham, guardedly. "Well, Margaret, my dear, so this is you! I think either you or Grace might have thought of sending the carriage; but you have been having company, I see—where is Grace?"

"Oh, dearest Jean!" cried Miss Leslie, rushing forward, "to think that you should arrive like this without any one expecting you! And oh, dear Ludovic, you too! I am sure—"

"You have been having company, I see," said Mrs. Bellingham; "I trust we are not interrupting anything. I will take a seat here for a little; I think it is the coolest place in the house. You had better ask your friends to take chairs, Grace."

"Oh, dearest Jean, it is Mr. Glen, the clever artist, you know, who—but I don't know the—the—" What should Miss Leslie have said? To call Mrs. Glen a lady was not practicable, and to call her a woman was evidently an offence against politeness. "I assure you," she said in her sister's ear, "I don't know in the least who she is."

Mrs. Bellingham sat down in the great chair which stood by the fireplace, a great old carved throne in black wood, which looked like a chief-justice's at least. It was close to the door, and served to bar all exit. Sir Ludovic had come in a minute after her, and he had been engaged in greeting his little sister Margaret, and shaking hands with Randal Burnside, whom he was

very glad to see, with a little surprise, but without *arrière-pensée*. But when the salutations were over he looked round him, and with a sudden, sharp exclamation, discovered Rob Glen by his side.

"Margaret," he said at once, "you had better retire; my dear, you had better retire. I don't think this is a place for you."

"I beg your pardon, Ludovic," said Mrs. Bellingham; "where her brother and her sisters are is just the right place for Margaret. I have not the pleasure of knowing the Miss Leslies' friends—neither do you, I suppose; but Margaret will just remain, and I dare say everything will be cleared up. It is a very fine day," Jean said, with a gracious attempt to conciliate everybody, "and very good for bringing on the hay."

After this there was a slight pause again; but Mrs. Glen felt that this was a tribute to her own professional knowledge; and as no one else took up the rôle of reply, she came forward a step, with a little cough and clearing of her throat.

"England's a great deal forwarder in that respect than we are in our part of the world," she said. "It's no muckle mair than the spring season wi' us, and here it's perfit simmer. We'll no be thinking o' the hay for this month to come; but I wouldna wonder if it was near cutting here."

Meanwhile, Sir Ludovic had gone up to Rob Glen in great agitation. "What are you doing here?" he said. "Why did you come here? I never thought you would have taken such a step as this. I gave you credit for more straightforwardness, more gentlemanly feeling—"

"There has been enough of this!" cried Rob. Exasperation is of kin to despair. Amidst all these bewildered faces looking at him, not one was friendly—not one looked at him as the future master of the house, as the man who was one day to be Margaret's husband should have been looked at. And Margaret herself had no thought of standing by him. She had shrunk away from him into the background, as if she would have seized the opportunity to escape. "There has been enough of this," he said; "I do not see any reason why I should put up with it. If I am here, it is because there is no other place in the world where I have so much right to be. I have come to claim my rights. Margaret can tell you what right I have to be here."

"Margaret!" repeated Mrs. Bellingham, wondering, in her high-pitched voice.

"Glen!" cried Randal, interrupting him with nervous haste—"I told you I had an important proposal to make to you. When you know that I came down expressly to bring it, I think I might have your attention at least. Will you come with me and hear what it is? I beg your pardon, Mrs. Bellingham; I do not want to interfere with any other explanation; but I came down on purpose, and Glen ought to give me an answer, while I have time to stay—"

"Eh, bide a moment, bide a moment, Mr. Randal; gie him but a half-hour's grace," cried Mrs. Glen. "Speak up, Rob, my bonnie man."

Randal, though he felt his intervention useless, made one last effort. "I must have my answer at once," he cried, impatient. "I tell you it is for your interest, Glen—"

"I don't think, gentlemen," said Sir Ludovic,

"that this is a place to carry on an argument between yourselves, with which the ladies of this house, at least, have nothing to do."

"If you will not come, I at least must go!" Randal cried, with great excitement. He gave her an anxious glance, which she did not even see, and threw up his hands with a gesture of despair. "I can do no good here," he said.

Rob glared round upon them all—all looking at him—all hostile, he thought. He had it in his power, at least, to frighten these people who looked down upon him, who would think him not good enough to mate with them. He turned toward Margaret, who still stood behind him, trembling, and called out her name in a voice that made the hall ring.

"Margaret! it is you that have the first right to be consulted. Sir Ludovic, you know as well as I do that Margaret is pledged to be my wife."

"His wife!" Mrs. Bellingham sat bolt-upright in her chair, and Miss Leslie, with a little shriek, ran to Margaret's side, with the instinct of supporting what seemed to her the side of sentiment against tyranny. "Darling Margaret! lean upon me—let me support you; I will never forsake you!" she breathed, fervently, in her young sister's ear.

"Silence!" cried Sir Ludovic; "how dare you, sir, make such a claim upon a young lady under age? If you had the feelings of a gentleman—"

At this moment, Mrs. Glen stepped forward to do battle for her son.

"You may think it fine manners, Sir Ludovic, to cast up to my Rob that he's no a gentleman; but it doesna seem fine manners to me. Ay, that she is! troth-plighted till him, as I can bear witness, and by a document, my ladies and gentlemen, that ye'll find to be good in law."

"Mother, hold your tongue!" cried Rob. A suppressed fury was growing in him; he felt himself an alien among these people whom he was claiming to belong to, but of whom nobody belonged to him, except the mother, whose homeliness and inferiority was so very apparent to his eyes. He was growing hoarse with excitement and passion. "Sir Ludovic knows so well what my position is," he said, with dry lips, "that he has asked me to give it up; he has tried before now to persuade me that I was required to prove myself a gentleman by giving it up. A gentleman! what does that mean?" cried Rob. "How many gentlemen would there be left if they were required to give up everything that is most dear to them, to prove the empty title? Do gentlemen sacrifice their interests and their hopes for nothing?—or do you count it honorable in a gentleman to abandon the woman he loves? If so, I am no gentleman, as you say. I will not give up Margaret. She chose me as much as I chose her. She is frightened, and you may force her into abandoning her betrothed and breaking her word. Women are fickle, and she is afraid of you all; but she is mine, and I will never give her up."

"Margaret," said Sir Ludovic, taking her hand and drawing her forward, "give this man his answer. Tell him you will have none of him. You may have been imprudent—"

"But she can be prudent now," said Rob Glen, with a smile; "she can give up, now that she is rich, the man that loved her when she was poor. Margaret! yes, you can please them and

leave me because I have nothing to offer you. They say such lessons are easily learned; but I would not have looked for it from you."

Margaret stood in the centre, in face of them all, with her brain reeling and her heart wrung. She had a consciousness that Randal was there too, looking at her, which was a mistake, for he had left the hall hastily when his attempt was foiled; but all the others were round her, making a spectacle of her confusion, searching her with their eyes. What had she to do but to repeat the vehement denial which she had given to Rob himself not half an hour ago? She wrung her hands. The case was different: here he was alone, contending with them all for her. Her heart ached for him, though she shrank from him. She gave a low cry and hid her face in her hands: how could she desert him? how could she cast him off, when he stood thus alone?

"You see," said Rob, triumphantly, with a wonderful sense of relief, "she will not cast me off as you bid her. She is mine. You will never be able to separate us if we are true to each other. Margaret, my darling, lift your sweet face and look at me. All the brothers in the world cannot separate us. Give me your hand, darling, for it is mine."

"Stand off, sir!" cried Sir Ludovic, furious; and Mrs. Bellingham, coming down from her chair as from a throne, came and stood between them, putting out her hand to put the intruder away. Jean was all but speechless with wonder and rage. She put her other hand upon Margaret's shoulder and pushed her from her, giving her a shake, as she did so, of irrepressible wrath. "What is the meaning of all this? Put those people out, Ludovic! put this strange woman, I tell you, to the door!"

"Put us out!" cried Mrs. Glen. "I'll daur ye to do that at your peril! Look at what I've got here. I have come straight from my ain house to bring this, that has never left my hands since that frightened lassie there wrote it out. It's her promise and vow before God, that is as good as marriage in Scots law, as everybody kens. Na, you'll no get it out of my hands. There it is! You may look till you're tired. You'll find no cheater here."

"Did you write this, Margaret?" said her brother, in tones of awful judicial severity, as it seemed to her despairing ears. They all gathered round, with a murmur of excitement.

"Marriage in Scots law! good Lord, anything is marriage in Scots law," Mrs. Bellingham said, under her breath, in a tone of horror. Grace burst out into a little scream of excitement, wringing her hands.

"Did you write this, Margaret?" still more solemnly Sir Ludovic asked again. Margaret uncovered her face. She looked at them all with her heart sinking. Here was the final moment that must seal her fate. It seemed to her that after she had made her confession there would be nothing for her to do but to go forth, away from all she cared for, with the two strangers who had her in their power. She clasped her hands together, and looked at the group, which was all blurred and indistinct in her eyes. She could not defend herself, or explain herself at such a moment, but breathed out from her very soul a dismal, reluctant, almost inaudible "Yes!" which seemed the very utterance of despair.

"Ay, my bonnie lady," said Mrs. Glen, triumphant, "you never were the one to go against your ain act and deed. Me and my Rob, we ken you better than all your grand friends. Weel I kent that whatever they might say, you would never go against your ain hand of write."

Rob had been standing passive all this time, with such a keen sense of the terror in Margaret's eyes, and the contempt that lay under the serious trouble of the others, as stung him to the very centre of his being. The unworthiness of his own position, the bewildered misery of the girl whom he was persecuting, the seriousness of the crisis as shown by the troubled looks of the brother and sister who were bending their heads over the paper which his mother held out so triumphantly—all this smote the young man with a sudden, sharp perception. He was not of a mean nature altogether. The quick impulses which swayed him turned as often to generosity as to self-interest; and all this while there had been films about this pursuit of the young heiress which had partially deceived him as to its true nature.

What is there in the world more hard than to see ourselves as we appear to those on the other side? A sudden momentary overwhelming revelation of this came upon him now. He did not hear the whispers of "compromise it"—"offer him something—offer him anything," which Jean, utterly frightened, was pouring into her brother's ear. He saw only the utter abandonment of misery in Margaret's face, the vulgar triumph in his mother's, the odious position in which he himself stood between them. In a moment his sudden resolution was taken: he pushed in roughly into the group, in passionate preoccupation, scarcely seeing them, and snatched the scrap of paper she held out of his mother's hands. "Margaret!" he cried, loudly, in his excitement, "look here! and here! and here!" tearing it into a thousand fragments. He pushed his mother aside, who rushed with a shriek upon him to save them, and tossed the little white atoms into the air. "I asked for your love," he said, his eyes moistening, his face glowing, "not for papers or promises. Give me that, or nothing at all."

Sudden tears rushed to Margaret's eyes; she did not know what had happened, but she felt that she was saved.

"Oh, Rob!" she cried, turning to him, putting out her hands.

Sir Ludovic sprang forward and took both these hands into his.

"Margaret, do you want to marry him?" he cried.

"Oh no, no, no; but anything else!" the girl said. "It was never he that did *that*. He was always kind—kinder than anybody in the world: I am his friend! Let me go, Ludovic! Rob," she said, going up to him, giving him her hand, the tears dropping from her eyes, "not *that*; but I am your friend; I will always be your friend, whatever may happen, wherever we may be. I will never forget you, Rob. Good-bye! You are kind again, you are like yourself; you are my old Rob that always was my friend."

Rob took her hands into his. He stooped over her and kissed her on the forehead: he would not give in without a demonstration of his power. Then he flung her hands away from

him almost with violence, and turned to the door.

"It seems my fate never to be able to do what is best for myself," he said, looking back with a wave of his hand and an irrepressible burst of self-assertion, as he turned and disappeared among the flowering bushes outside the open door.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Rob issued forth out of the Grange discomfited and beaten, but without the sense of moral downfall which had been bowing him to the ground. His heart was melted, his spirit softened. He was defeated, but he was not humiliated. He had come off with all the honors of war—not an insulted coward, but a magnanimous hero. "All is lost but honor," he said to himself, with an expansion of his breast. His eyes were still wet with the dew of generous feeling; he had not been forced into renunciation; he had himself evacuated the untenable position. There was a little braggadocio in this self-consciousness—a little even of what in school-boy English is called swagger; but still he had a certain right to his swagger. He had taken the only possible way of coming out with honor from the dilemma in which he had placed himself. He said to himself that it was a great sacrifice he had made. All the hopes upon which he had dwelt so long and fondly were gone; he was all at sea again for his future, and did not know what to do. What was he to do? He could not return to the aimless life he had pursued in his mother's house; and by this time he had found out that it was by no means so easy as he had supposed to get fortune and reputation in London. What should he do? He could hope nothing from his mother. He knew well with what reproaches she would overwhelm him, what taunts she would have in her power. He must do something to secure himself independence, though for so long he had hoped that independence was coming to him in the easiest way—a rich wife—not only rich, but fair—the "position of a gentleman," most dearly cherished of all the gifts of fortune—a handsome house, leisure and happiness, and everything that heart of man could desire. The breaking up of this dream called forth a sigh when the first elation of his victory over himself was over, and then he began to droop as he walked on. No elevation in the social scale was likely to come now. Rob Glen, the son of a small farmer, he was, and would remain; not the happy hero of a romance, not the great artist undeveloped, not the genius he had thought. Thus the brag and the swagger gradually melted away; the sense of moral satisfaction ceased to give him as much support as at first—even the generous sentiment sank into a sense of failure. What was to become of him? He walked on, dull but dogged, going steadily forward, but scarcely knowing where he was going; and thus came upon Randal Burnside walking along the same road before him, more anxious and excited, and not much less discouraged and melancholy than he.

Randal's face brightened slightly at the sight of him.

"You have come, after all, Glen," he said; "I had almost given you up."

"I gave myself up before I came," said Rob.

"What do you mean? I suppose they were hard upon you—perhaps you could scarcely expect it to be otherwise; but with your good-fortune you may easily bear more than that," said Randal: then he checked himself, remembering that Margaret's horror of her lover's presence pointed to not much good-fortune. "Let me tell you now what my business was," he said, with a sigh. He was too loyal to depart from his purpose; but though (he thought) he would have given up life itself to serve Margaret, yet he could not make this sacrifice without a sigh. He told his companion very briefly what it was. It was an offer from a newspaper to investigate a subject of great popular interest, requiring some knowledge of Scotch law. "But that I could easily coach you in," Randal said. He went into it in detail, showing all its advantages, as they walked along the country road. The first necessity it involved was a speedy start to the depths of Scotland, close work for three months, good pay, and possible reputation. Rob listened to the whole with scarcely a remark. When Randal paused, he turned upon him hastily:

"This was offered not to me, but to yourself," he said.

"Yes; but you know a little of the law, and I could easily coach you in all you require."

"And why do you offer it to me?"

"Come," said Randal, with a laugh, "there is no question of motive; I don't offer it to you from any wish to harm you. To tell the truth, it would suit me very well myself."

"And you would give it to me, to relieve *her* of my presence?" cried Rob. "I see it now! Burnside, will you tell me honestly, what is your reward to be?"

"I have neither reward nor hope of reward," cried Randal; "evidently not even a thank-you. I would not answer such a question, but that I see you are excited—"

"Yes, I am excited—I have good cause. I have given her up, and every hope connected with her; so there is no more need to bribe me," said Rob, with a harsh laugh. "Keep your appointment to yourself."

"Will you take it, or will you leave it, Glen? What may have happened otherwise is nothing to me—"

"There is the train," said Rob. "No! I'll take nothing, either from her dislike or your friendship—nothing! There are still some in the world that care more for me than charity. Good-bye."

He made a dash up the bank, where a train was visible, puffing and pulling up at the little station—the legitimate road being a quarter of a mile round, and hopeless.

"Come back!" cried Randal; "you will break your neck. There is another train—"

Rob made no reply, but waved his hand, and dashed in wild haste over ditch and paling. Randal stood breathless, and saw him reach the height and spring into a carriage at the last moment, as the train puffed and fretted on its way. The spectator did not move—what was the use? He had no wish to take the same wild road: he stood and looked after the long white plume as it coursed across the country.

"He has got it, and I have lost it," he said; but Randal smiled to himself. A sense of ease, of relief, and pleasure after so much pain, came over him. There was no longer any hurry. Should he go forward? should he turn back?—it did not much matter; he had two or three hours on his hands before he could get away.

The rush and noise of the train was a relief, on the other hand, to the traveller. As it pounded along, with rull and clang, and shrill whistle, the sudden hurry of his thoughts kept time. He had not a moment to lose. Now and then, when its speed slackened, he got up and paced about the narrow space of the carriage, as if the continued movement got him on the faster. When he reached London, he jumped into a hansom and dashed through the crowded Strand to one of the little streets leading down toward the river. Arrived there, he thundered at a door and rushed up-stairs, three steps at a time, till he came to a little room at the top of the house, where the sole occupant, a young woman, had been sitting, looking wistfully out upon a glimpse of the river, which showed in dim twilight reflections at the foot of the street, for it was almost night. Her father was out, and Jeanie sat alone. She had "nae heart" to walk about the streets, to look in at the dazzling shop-windows, to take any pleasure in the sight of London. She was thinking—would she see him again? would he come and bid her farewell, as he said, "The day after the morn, the day after the morn?" she was saying to herself, sometimes putting up her hand to brush away a furtive tear from the corner of her eyes. That was the final day; after which, in this world, she should see Rob's face no more.

"Jeanie," he cried, coming in breathless, "I have come back to you as I said." Jeanie stumbled up to her feet, and fell a crying with a tremulous smile about her lips.

"Oh, I'm glad, glad to see you," she cried, "once mair, once mair, though it's naething but to say farewell! We're to sail the day after the morn."

"The day after the morn." He took Jeanie's hands, which gave themselves up to his as Margaret's shrinking fingers had never done, and looked into her pretty, rustic face, all quivering with love and the anguish of parting. Jeanie had made her little pretences of pride, her stand of maidenly dignity against him; but at this moment all these defences were forgotten. He had come so suddenly; and it was this once and never more, never more in all the world again. "The day after the morn," repeated Rob; "then there will just be time. I am coming with you; and if you will have a man without a penny, Jeanie, it shall be as man and wife that you and I will go."

She gave a cry of sharp pain and drew her hands out of his. "How dare you speak like that to me that means no harm? How dare you speak like that to me—and you another lass's lad, and never mine?"

"I am nobody's but yours," he said, "and, Jeanie, you need not try to deceive me. You never were but mine."

"But that's nae reason," she cried, wildly, "to come and make a fool of me to my face, Rob Glen. Oh, go, go to them you belong to!"

I thought I might have said farewell to you without another word; but even that canna be."

"There will never be farewell said between you and me, Jeanie," said Rob, seriously, "never from this moment till death does us part."

When Rob Glen, stung at once by the kindness and severity of which he had been the object, took this sudden resolution, and with a wild dash of energy, and without a pause, thus carried it out, Randal was left alone upon the country road, all strange and unfamiliar to him, but with which he seemed all at once to have formed so many associations, with two or three hours at his disposal. He stood and watched the train till it was out of sight, idly, with the most singular sense of leisure in opposition to that hurry and rush. From the moment when Rob had dashed up the bank, Randal had felt no longer in any hurry or anxiety about the train. It did not matter if he lost his train—nothing, indeed, seemed to matter very much for the moment. He saw the carriage that contained Rob rush out of sight while he was standing in the same place: if he chose to spend an hour in the same place, thinking over the causes which had carried Rob away, what would it matter? He had plenty of time for that or anything else—no hurry or care—the whole afternoon before him. Would it not be better, more civil to go back, and pay his respects at the Grange as he ought? He had rushed into the house like a savage, and rushed out again without a word to say for himself. Evidently this was not the way to treat ladies to whom he owed the utmost respect. He would go back. He turned accordingly, and went back; still at the most perfect leisure. Plenty of time; no hurry one way or another.

He had not gone far, however, before he met a curiously-matched pair coming up along the road together—Mrs. Glen talking loudly and angrily, Sir Ludovic walking beside her, sometimes saying a word, but for the most part passive, listening, and taking no notice. Randal heard her long before he saw the pair on the windings of the road. Mrs. Glen did not know whether to abuse or defend her son. She did both by turns. "A fine son, to leave me, that has aye thought far ower muckle of him, to find my way home as best I can, after making a fool of himself and a' belonging to him! But where was he to gang, poor lad? abused on a' hands—even by those that led him into his trouble," she cried. "There was no pause in her angry monologue. And, indeed, the poor woman, in her great Paisley shawl, with the hot sun playing upon her head, her temper exasperated, her body fatigued, her hopes baffled, might have something forgiven to her. "Gentry!" she cried, as she began to ascend the slope which led to the station, and which Randal was coming down; "a great deal the gentry have done for my family or me! Beguiled my Rob, the cleverest lad in a' Fife, till he's made a fool o' himself and ruined a' his prospects; and brought me trailing after him to a country where there's nae kindness nor hospitality—among people that never offer you so much as a stool to rest your weary limbs upon, or a cup o' tea to refresh you. Eh! if that's gentry, I would rather have the colliers' wives or the fisher bodies in Fife, let alone a good farm-house, and that's my ain."

"Mrs. Glen," said Sir Ludovic, "I am sure

my sisters would have wished you to rest and refresh yourself."

"Ay, among their servant-women, no doubt—if I would have bowed myself to that. I've paid rent to the Leslies for the last thirty years—nae doubt but they durstna have refused me a cup of tea; but I would have you to ken, Sir Ludovic, though you're a Sir, and I'm a plain farmer, that the like o' your servant-women are nae neebors for me."

"My good woman!"

"I'm nae good woman to be misca'ed by ane of your race! Good woman, quo' he! as I would say to some gangrel body. You're sair mistaken, Sir Ludovic, if that's what you think of the like of me, that has paid you rent, as I was saying, and held up my head with any in the parish, and given my bairns as good an education as you or yours could set your face to. If ye think, after a' that I've put up with, that I'm to take a 'good woman' from the laird, as if I wasna to the full as guid a tenant as he is a landlord, or maybe mair to lippen to."

"Would you have me say 'ill woman?'" said Sir Ludovic, with momentary peevishness, yet with a gleam of humor. "You are quite right, Mrs. Glen; you are better off, being a tenant, than I am as a landlord. The Leslies never were rich, that I heard tell of; and if we were proud, it never was to our neighbors, the people on our own land."

"Well, I wouldna say but that's true," said Mrs. Glen, softened. "Auld Sir Ludovic, your father, had aye a pleasant word for gentle and simple; and if it was not for that lang-tongued wife down bye yonder—"

Sir Ludovic, though he was a serious man, felt a momentary inclination to chuckle when he heard his sister Jean, the managing person of the family, described as a lang-tongued wife. But he said, gravely,

"In such a question, Mrs. Glen, there is a great deal to be considered. You would not have liked it yourself, had one of your daughters been courted without your knowledge by a peniless lover. When you see your son, if I can do anything for him, if I can advance his interests, let me know, and I will do it. He behaved like a man at the last."

"Oh ay; when a lad plays into your hands, it's easy to say that he's behaving like a man," she said. "But she was mollified by the praise, and her wrath had begun to wear itself out. "I'll gie you a word o' warning, Sir Ludovic, though you've little title to it from my hands," she added. "Here's Randal Burnside coming back. If you've saved your little Miss from ae wooer, here's another; and my word, I would sooner have a bonnie lad like my Rob, with real genius in his head, than a minister's son, neither ae thing nor another, like Randal Burnside."

They met a moment afterward, and Randal recounted what had happened; how Rob had caught the train, but he himself, being too late, had intended to return to the Grange for the interval, and was now on his way there. Mrs. Glen, however, would not return; she was too glad to be deposited in a shady room where she could loose her shawl and bonnet-strings, and fan herself with her large handkerchief. Sir Ludovic, who had "a warm heart for Fife," as he himself expressed it, and who had been touch-

ed by Rob's final self-vindication, did everything that could be done for her comfort, before he turned back with Randal. But they had no sooner left her, than he fell to talking with an appearance of relief.

"Thank God, that's done with!" he said. "It was very foolish of poor little Margaret; but, after all, it was nothing—nothing in law. My sister Jean got a terrible fright. There is a panic abroad in the world about Scotch marriages; but a promise that is only on one side can never be anything. You don't seem to know what I am talking of."

"No," said Randal, who had gone out of the hall before the climax came. He looked with bewildered curiosity in his companion's face.

"You should have told me, you should have told me—what did you know about it, then? And what were you doing there, Randal? Excuse me, but I have a right to know."

"You have a perfect right to know. I knew that Glen had, by some means, engaged—her—to himself," said Randal, not knowing how to express what he meant, reddening and faltering, as if he himself had been the culprit. "I saw them together twice at Earl's-hall; and once she was good enough to speak to me about it. I had taken no notice of her when I saw them, thinking, as one does brutally, that she understood what she was doing, as I did. And in her innocence she asked me why? What could I say but that I was a brute, and a fool—and that if I could ever serve her I would do it, should it cost me my life."

"That is the way you young idiots speak," said Sir Ludovic, with an impatient gesture. "Your life: how could it affect your life? But you were neither a fool nor brutal, that I can see. Poor little silly thing, she thought you were rude to pass her, did she? and what then? Innocent! oh yes, she's innocent enough."

"And then," said Randal, "she sent to beg me to help her, to keep him away from her. I managed it that time; and this morning she sent to me again. She must have seen her mistake very soon, Sir Ludovic, and what it has cost her. But I hope it is all over now."

"And you came down here, ane's errand, as we say in Scotland, for nothing but to relieve her mind? How did you mean to do it? What was the business you were so anxious to tell him about? I thought it was a strange business that you were so anxious to talk over with Rob Glen."

"It was very simple," said Randal, coloring high under this examination. "He is a clever fellow; he can write and draw, and has a great deal of talent. I wanted to send him off on a piece of work that had been offered to me—"

"To relieve her?"

"Because I thought he could do it—and for other reasons."

"I understand." Sir Ludovic went on in silence for some time while Randal's heart beat quick in his breast. He had said nothing to betray himself, and yet he felt himself betrayed.

After a while, Sir Ludovic turned and laid his hand kindly, but gravely, on Randal's shoulder.

"Tell me the simple truth," he said; "has it ever been breathed between you that you should succeed to the vacant place?"

"Never!" cried Randal, indignantly; "nor is there any vacant place," he added. "Glen took

advantage of a child's ignorance. She thought him kind to her. She was grateful to him, no more; and he took advantage of it. There is no vacant place."

"I see," said Sir Ludovic; then, after a pause: "Randal, you will act a man's part, and a friend's, if you will leave her to come to herself, with Jean to look after her. Jean may be 'a lang-tongued wife,'" he said, not able to repress a smile, "but she's a good woman in her way. She will take good care of our little sister. What is she but a child still? You will act an honorable part if you leave her to the women: leave her to be quiet and come to herself."

"I will follow your advice faithfully, as you give it in good faith, Sir Ludovic," said Randal, "if I can do so; but I warn you frankly that I will never be happy till I have told her what is in my heart."

"Oh yes, it needs no warlock to see what's coming," said Sir Ludovic, shaking his head; "and there's Jean's nephew, that young haverel of an Englishman—and probably two or three more, for anything I can tell. But let her alone, let her alone, Randal, I beseech you, till the poor little silly thing comes to herself."

It would be impossible to describe what hot resentment against such a disparaging title mingled with the softened state of sentiment and amiable friendliness with which Randal felt disposed to regard all the world, and especially this paternal brother, who was so much more like a father. "I will remember what you say, and attend to it—as far as I can," he said.

"That means, as far as it may happen to suit you, and not a step further," said Sir Ludovic, once more shaking his head.

Margaret was not visible when they got to the Grange. She was supposed to be in her own room, and unable to see any one; and, what was more extraordinary, Miss Grace was actually in her own room, and unable to see any one—having wept herself blind, and made her nose scarlet with grief, over the separation of the two lovers, and all the domestic tragedy that had occurred, as Mrs. Bellingham declared, entirely by her fault. If ever there was a woman to whom the separation of true lovers was distressful and terrible, Grace Leslie was that woman; and Jean said it was all her fault! "When I would give my life to make darling Margaret happy!" cried the innocent offender. "They should have my money, every penny; I would not care how I lived, or what I put on, so long as dearest Margaret was happy!" and she had retired speechless and sobbing, feeling the calamity too cruel. As for Mrs. Bellingham, she was in sole possession of the drawing-room, where the gentlemen found her, walking about and fanning herself, bursting with a thousand things to say. The sight of an audience within reach calmed her more than anything else could have done.

"What have you done with that woman, Ludovic?" she said. "She was an impertinent woman; but I'm sorry for her if you walked her all that way to the station as you walked me. Did ever anybody hear such a tongue—and the temper of a demon! But I hope I have some Christian feeling; and after the young man was gone, if you had not been in such a hurry, as she

is a Fife woman, and a tenant, I would have ordered her a cup of tea."

"I told her so," said Sir Ludovic; "but she is comfortable enough at the station, and I ordered the people at the inn to send her one."

"I would have done nothing of the kind," said Jean; "a randy, nothing but a randy; and just as likely as not to enter into the whole question, and make a talk about the family. And the way news spreads in an English village is just marvellous! Fife is bad enough, but Fife is nothing to it! So you have come back, Randal Burnside—oh yes, you young men are always missing your train. There's Aubrey would have been here with me and of some use, but that he could not get out of his bed soon enough in the morning. I am very glad Aubrey's coming; he will be a change from all this. And I never saw a young man with so much tact. Are you going up by the next train, Randal, or are you going to stay? Oh well, if you will not think it uncivil, I am glad for one thing that you're going; for I came away in such a hurry, and forgot one of the things I wanted most. If you would go to Simpson's—not Simpson's, you know, in Sloane Street, nor the one in the Burlington Arcade, but Simpson's in Wigmore Street, the great shop for artificial flowers—"

"You need not be at so much trouble to conceal our family commotions," said Sir Ludovic; "Randal knows all about it better than either you or me."

"Then I would just like to hear what he knows!" said Mrs. Bellingham. "I don't know anything about it myself, and I don't think I want to know. Randal, what time is your train? Will you be able to stay till dinner, or can I give you some tea? The tea will be here directly, but dinner may be a little late for Aubrey, who is coming by quite a late afternoon train. He said he had business; but you young men you have always got business. To hear you, one would think you never had a moment. And, Ludovic, just sit down and be quiet, and not fuss about and put me out of my senses. Now I will give you your tea."

Randal, however, did not stay until it was time for his train. Signs of the past excitement were too strong in the house to make it pleasant to a stranger; and Margaret being absent, he had small interest in the Grange. He took his leave, saying he would take a stroll and look at the grounds—a notion much encouraged by Mrs. Bellingham. "Do that, Randal," she said; "I wish I were not so tired, I would go with you myself, and let you see everything. And I'll tell Grace and Margaret you were very sorry not to see them, but time and trains wait for no man. You'll give my kind regards to your excellent father and mother, and you'll not forget the wreaths at Simpson's—plain white for Margaret. No, I'll not keep you, for my mind is occupied, and I know I'm not an amusing companion. Good-bye; I hope you will come another time, Randal, *when we expect you*, and when we will be able to show a little attention. Good-bye!"

Randal went away with a smile at the meaning that lay beneath Mrs. Bellingham's significant words. Should he ever come here as one who was expected, and who had a claim upon the attention she promised him? He looked wistfully up the oak staircase and at the winding

passages, by some of which Margaret must have gone. Perhaps she would never know that he had been here. And at the same time, perhaps, it was better that he should not see her. She was rich, while as yet he was not rich, and he had no right to say anything to her; while, perhaps, if they met at this moment of agitation, it might be difficult to refrain from saying something. Thus sadly disappointed, but trying to represent to himself that he was not disappointed, he went through the shrubbery and out into the little park.

How different it was from old Earl's-hall! Glimpses of the old red house, glowing at every corner in some wealth of blossom, early roses climbing everywhere, wreaths of starry clematis twisted about the walls, and clusters of honeysuckle up to the very eaves, came to him through the trees at every turn he took. So full of color and warmth, and set in the brilliant sunshine of this June day, warm as no midsummer ever attains to be in Fife—the contrast between Margaret's old home and her new one struck him strangely. The old solemn gray walls, the keener, clearer tones of the landscape, the dark masses of ivy about the half-ruinous tower of Earl's-hall, came suddenly before his eyes. The scene was grayer and colder, but the central figure had been all life and color there. Here it was the landscape that was warm, in its wealthy background, and she that was pale, in her dress of mourning.

He was thinking this, musing of her and nothing else, when he suddenly saw a shadow glide softly through the trees and stand for a moment upon a little rustic bridge over the small stream which flowed at a distance from the house. He started and hurried that way, striding along over the grass that made his steps noiseless. And, sure enough, it was Margaret. The fresh air was a more familiar restorative than "lying down," which was Jean's panacea for agitation as for toothache. She was standing watching the clear running water, wondering at all that had happened—her sob scarcely sobbed out, and apt to come back; her eyes not yet dry, and her lips still parted with that quick breath which told the unstilled beating of her heart. Poor Rob! would he be unhappy? Her heart gave a special ache for him, then quivered with another question: Was Randal angry? Did he think badly of her, that he would not speak?

She looked up hastily, when a step sounded close to her on the path, and that same fluttering heart gave a leap of terror. Then it stilled into sudden relief and repose. "Oh, Randal! you have not gone away!" she cried; and her face, that had been so passive, lighted up.

"I came back," he said; and the two stood looking at each other for a moment—he on one side of the tinkling water, she on the bridge. "But I am going away," he added: "Rob has gone."

"Oh, poor Rob!—he was very kind after all: it was a mistake, only a mistake. It was my fault. I did not like—to hurt his feelings. You should never let any one think a thing is true that is not true, Randal. It is as bad as telling a lie. It is all over now," she said, looking at him wistfully, with a faint smile.

"And you are glad?" He grudged her moistened eyes and the sob that broke, in spite of

her, into her voice, and the tone with which she said "poor Rob!"

Margaret did not make any reply to this question; she looked at him once more wistfully.

"Were you angry," she said, "that you would not speak? I should not have troubled you, Randal, but my heart was broken. I was nearly out of my wits with terror. I did not know how to stand out and keep my own part. Were you angry, Randal, that you would not speak?"

"Margaret," he said, "why should you ask me such questions? I am never angry with you; or, if I am angry, it is for love; because I would do anything you ask me, even against myself."

Margaret smiled. Her eyes filled with something that was half light and half tears. "And me too!" she said.

Thus, without any grammar, and without any explanation, a great deal was said. Randal went to his train, and Margaret, smiling to herself, went home across the bridge. Both Jean and Grace heard her singing softly as she went up the oak staircase, and could not believe their ears. Grace cried more bitterly still to think that her darling Margaret should show so little feeling, and Jean was dumfounded that she should not be ashamed of herself—a girl just escaped from such a danger, and so nearly mixed up in a horrible story! Sir Ludovic, who had girls of his own, only laughed and shook his head. "She will have seen the right one," he said, with a gleam of amusement to himself. Perhaps he was all the more indulgent that Aubrey, who was clearly Jean's candidate, and far too much a man of society for plain Sir Ludovic, arrived with the cream of current scandal, and a most piquant story about Lady Grandton

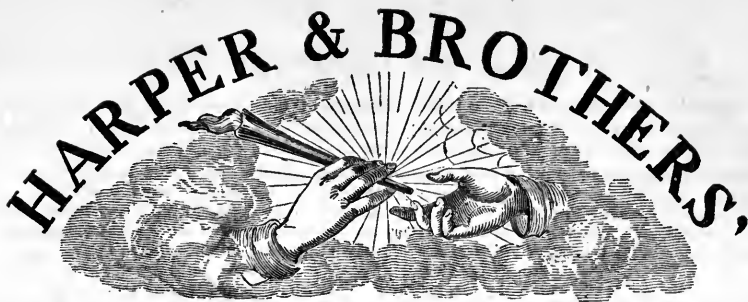
and a certain Duke—"the same man, you know—all come on again, as everybody prophesied," that very night.

Rob Glen set off within forty-eight hours for the other side of the world, with Jeanie as his wife. He had not much more money than would buy the license that made this possible, and pay his passage, and would have faced the voyage and the New World without either outfit or preparation but for a timely present of a hundred pounds that reached him the night before he sailed. But he never spoke of this even to his wife, though his mother was aware of it, who—though she would not see Jeanie—saw him, and dismissed him with a stormy farewell.


"Sir Ludovic, honest man, might well say it was a heart-break to see your bairn throw himself away—little we kent, him and me, how sooth he was speaking," Mrs. Glen said. When it was all over, it gave her a little consolation to quote Sir Ludovic, what "he said to me, and I said to him," when she met him "in the South."


On the other hand, it cannot be denied that it was a great shock to Margaret to hear what had happened, and how soon and how completely the baffled suitor had consoled himself. "All the time it was Jeanie's Rob," she said to herself, with a scorching blush; and for the moment felt as deeply shamed and humbled as Rob himself had been by her indifference. And when Jean heard of these two or three words with Randal, which, indeed, as Mrs. Bellingham said indignantly, "settled nothing—for after an affair of that kind what is to hinder her having a dozen?" she was very angry, and planted thorns in Margaret's pillow. But Jean will not be supreme forever over her little sister's life.

THE END.



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*Jury Harvey's
Fair to See*

A Novel

By L. W. M. LOCKHART

AUTHOR OF "FAIR TO SEE"



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MINE IS THINE.

CHAPTER I.

I HUMBLY desire, dear readers, to please you if I can, and therefore hasten to gratify an aspiration which lurks in all novel-readers' hearts—to "get into the thick of the business at once." So come with me and be summarily introduced to one or two principal personages of this little drama. Let us take them unawares, let us surprise them while they sit at meat—eating, drinking, and (some of them, at least) making merry—on the margin of the Lake of Como, in one of the pleasantest hotels in Europe, the Bellevue, at Cadenabbia. And do thou, old Time, turn back in thy flight a few short years, and suffer us to enter the *table-d'hôte* room of the hotel in question on the bright evening of an early summer day in 187—.

The banquet is spread. The guests are assembled or assembling. They are of many nationalities, of diverse ranks, of most ages; each of the three sexes is represented, for more than one palpable curate bows his meek head over the flesh-pot. You find the noise a little trying at first, don't you? The crockery *does* seem to be possessed with devils, and every glass in the room must have St.-Vitus's-dance. Every one seems to be impatient at first—hungry, angry, vociferous. What tempers these waiters must have! Outside the window a string-band is playing a selection from the "Barbiers." Could anything be more appropriate? "*Figaro quâ, Figaro là!*" shrieks the band. "*Kellner!*" "*Garçon!*" "*Cameriere!*" "*Waiter!*" shout the guests; and through all the crush and bustle these admirable men glide about—here, there, everywhere, breathless and perspiring, but full of polyglot politeness and attention. The only calm, still, cool-looking object in the room is that tremendous head-waiter in the buff waistcoat, standing near the door, in Jove-like serenity. The guests, as they enter, pause before him to ask where they may place themselves. In that august presence they appear to peak and dwindle. He is too great to speak, but waves them off to their destinations, exact and unerring as omniscience. His whole air seems to say, "A good man struggling with difficulties *may* be a sight for the gods; but how much grander this, the spectacle of a great man overcoming every difficulty *without* a struggle, with a bosom as unruffled as the buff garment which envelops it!" The diapason of discord has achieved itself in the sudden collapse of that mottle-faced waiter, involving in his ruin thirteen

plates, a dish of potatoes, and a bottle of Médoc; and, now that the yells of yonder German have caused the last window in the room to be closed, things begin to settle down into a little more quiescence. Come, then, and thread with me the hall. Don't look at that indigestive spinster unless you wish to be petrified. Don't waste a thought upon that glorious-looking old man with the dome-like head and long white mustache. He is *not* a very distinguished general of division. He is a City man—probably a stock-broker—and his name is, conceivably, Crump. Never mind the brunette—beautiful as a star, but nothing to *us*. Come on. Eat with their knives? Of course they do. The only Russian princess whose confidence I have enjoyed, ate with *her* knife—quite a trifle when you're accustomed to it. You see that old lady dwelling in the fool's paradise of an auburn "front" and immense gutta-percha teeth? Well, next her are two men. *Voilà notre affaire.* These are my hero Cosmo Glencairn, and his friend Tom Wyedale. Yes, the fair one is Cosmo. Why not? Heroes ought to be dark? I deny it—not English heroes. They ought to be buff men, with blue eyes, like the Vikings. Well, there they are. Draw near to them, and listen to them, and look out for new arrivals. And now I leave you to find your way through the labyrinth of this tale, from which the gods give you and me a safe and happy deliverance!

"The menagerie seems to be fuller than usual to-night, Cosmo," said Tom; "the roaring is louder, and there seem to be several new varieties. I see a new skunk, and a chimpanzee, and a sunfish, and a hippopotamus."

"And all that being interpreted—"

"And all that being interpreted means that we have a considerable increase in the number of our co-diners, and that the new-comers are rather a shady lot to look at."

"Not very distinguished-looking, certainly. What is the meaning of it, I wonder? It isn't near the tourists' season, yet many of the new arrivals look like the ideal tourist—not the least like returning swallows from the Riviera or Rome."

"Not a bit of it; but, perhaps, something has been taking place in England—the Whitsuntide holidays or something."

"You pagan! we are still a fortnight from Whit-Sunday."

"Are we? I apologize. One forgets everything in this Sleepy Hollow. But, Whit-Sunday or not, if Mr. Cook had shot a whole caravan

into the district, we couldn't be richer in his typical followers."

"Yes, I've seen the kind of people before, in connection with a 'conductor.' It's the old problem of the flies in amber."

"Seen them before! By George, they're all here! There's the 'expansive' Briton—that underdone-looking man. See how he talks at, through, up against, down upon, everybody and everything! He has a joke for every one. He chaffs them all round, waiters included. He is button-holing the whole table with his eye. Listen to the monster. How he laughs! You can hear nothing else. What a fearful thing is vulgar geniality! That fellow would chaff the Pope if he could get at him."

"Then there are two or three specimens of the 'reticent' Briton. That pock-marked fellow, staring so fiercely at four inches of the table in front of him, is one of them. Doesn't he look as if his pockets were full of Orsini bombs? as if he were making up his mind to let them off at once, and blow us all to smithereens? And there's another—that hectic man in the white tie, looking as if he had just picked a pocket. They are both in a white terror of being addressed in a foreign tongue; for, behold, beside one sits a restless-looking Frenchman, and by the other an affable Muscovite. *Hinc ille lacrymae!* And there is the archaeological female Briton—she may be in some other 'ology' perhaps, but she certainly goes in for 'mind' and science of some sort. They're all the same. You can't mistake them. Limp, and with that mysterious topknot of scraggy hair gathered together from the uttermost parts of the head, she looks as if a savage had tomahawked her, and, finding the scalp unsatisfactory, had hurriedly replaced it. Doesn't she, Cosmo? Oh, how I suffered from one of the tribe at Eleusis last year! The sun was raging, but she seated herself on a fallen capital and held me, like the Ancient Mariner, while she lectured for half an hour on the spirit of Greek art. She had come from Athens without an escort, braving the brigands with no protection save her awful virginity; and I fear there is no doubt it got her safe back. And, ah! I thought we should find him here; and there he is, sure enough, up at the end of the opposite table—and a fine specimen he is, too, of the 'domestic' Briton. You can see through all that fellow's dodges, and read him like a book. These two girls are his daughters, and he trembles for them. Every well-looking individual of the opposite sex is a hawk ready to swoop upon his dove-cot. You, Cosmo, are a hawk."

"Thanks; I fear your definition won't permit a *tu quoque*."

"You are, as I say, in this man's perverted vision, a hawk. His mind is full of hawks and foreign counts. The foreign count is *his* Anti-christ, and every well-dressed foreigner is a count 'within the meaning of the Act.' Observe how he has strategized against hawks and counts. He has thrown out a flanking party on either side of the dove-cot—that tough-looking spinster on the left, obviously an aunt; the hobbled-hoy on the right, clearly a brother; and he himself is a big gun of position in the centre, ready to go off with fearful detonations."

"The doves are rather pretty, Tom, the blue one is really a charming little *ingenue*."

"Passable—passable; and, indeed, I find the pink sister not without attraction. Impossible head-gear, though."

"Oh, *cela va sans dire*; at present all head-gears are impossible. Now, if you were to tilt back that terrible erection on the girl's head till it sloped from the sky-line of the head, over the neck, you would—"

"Steady, Cosmo! outlying picket alarmed and signalling to the main body. Look at the weather. Opposite window; charming evening, isn't it? What a bloom there is on that hill opposite! How the last rays of the sun are bringing out the tints of everything!"

"Including that bottle of 'Gattinara,' which has been with *you* ever since we sat down. Pass it, before it is quite empty. I'll tell you what it is, Tom, it is not a remunerative system going shares in wine with a talkative fellow like you. You don't give yourself time to eat much, but you do contrive to drink like a whale."

"Do I? The action is quite mechanical, I assure you."

"Very likely, but it empties the bottle quite as effectually as if it were deliberate."

"After all, what is there in *one* bottle of 'Gattinara'?"

"Precisely what I wish to discover. Pass it."

"Cornish men? No, surr; I never fouled a Cornish man—not to know him." Thus spake a cadaverous American gentleman, who sat opposite the two friends, addressing an English neighbor, and splitting up his remarks into short, irregular sentences.

"They are splendid men, I can tell you," said the neighbor; "they're descended from the ancient Britons, you know."

"Are they, now? Well, I niver met an ancient Briton. But if any of them were to give a look down Texas way. They'd keep quiet about their descendants when they went back, I guess. They've got a kind of a man down there, surr, that mostly runs seventy-three to seventy-seven inches. That's good enough, ain't it? You've heard of William G. Howkins?"

"I think not."

"Ah! that was a kind of a man that stood ninety-two inches. And a fraction. And when he killed the grizzly that ran to nine hundred pounds in its skin and claws. You've heard of that bear?"

"No, I can't say I have."

"Wall, he took and carried that thar grizzly, and went browsin' all around the town with that thar carcass on his back. To show him. That's the kind of man William G. Howkins was. And that's the kind of man they raise, down Texas way. I guess an ancient Briton would feel rather mean and skinny down there. I guess he'd feel downright d—d ashamed of his descendants. When he saw them again."

"Howkins must have been a Goliath."

"Wall, he *was* above the middle height. But he ain't the size now. Not since the war."

"How do you mean?"

"Wall, there was a cannon-ball that was a trifle quick for him at Gettysburg. He got his legs chipped. And shortened up, at that time, seven or eight inches. But, I guess, they'd still show the balance of him in Cornwall. For money. W. G. H. wasn't descended from nobody. You bet."

"A've harrod o' a Glasca man—" began another gentleman, in the solemn doric of North Britain.

"Be japers!" interrupted a sprightly-looking neighbor—"be japers! Mr. Howkins must be own brother to Larry O'Toole's aunt,

"That had niver a father,
And sorra a mother,
But jist poured herself out from a jug of potheen."

"A racklack a Glasca man—u'm thinkin' his name was Fechnie—" Interruption, however, again befell the Scot, for an excitable-looking Frenchman, who had been intently listening to the dialogue, suddenly gave tongue.

"Messieurs," he exclaimed, "comment cela s'explique-t-il? Moi, je comprends parfaitement l'Anglais, mais il n'y a pas moyen de vous comprendre, vous autres. Vous parlez trois—mais, oui!—quatre langues entre vous, tout à la fois. Que veut dire ce 'Larree O'Toal'? Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce 'Glass Cow'? Comment expliquez vous cet abominable 'Racklaxe'? Dites donc, je vous en prie, comment—" But here a shout of laughter reduced the Gaul to foaming silence.

The meal went bustling on. The blended tumult of a hundred voices rose and fell, as interval and onset relieved each other; but at every revival the pitch of voices seemed higher, and the laughter more strenuous than before—save where, like veritable "Towers of Silence," the types of reticence sat wrapped in a taciturnity that seemed to become palpable—to make itself felt—even amidst that human Babel, with its crashing symphonies from delf and metal. All round the table quaint idiosyncrasies progressively evolved themselves before the laughing eyes of Cosmo Glencairn and his loquacious friend. About a third of the dinner had been achieved. The American Eagle was soaring sublime, on reckless wings of hyperbole and myth. The Scotchman, who had failed to find a single taker for some creaking observations on the bothy system, as pursued in Ross-shire, was watching the Eagle, with the intention of a trapper in his eye. His French neighbor continued to mutter, "Il n'y a pas moyen de comprendre ces gneux d'Anglais." One female representative of British mind, thinking entomology to be a good light dinner subject—safe to draw—had plunged into the habits of the "Death's-head Moth," and secured, for a time, the sympathy of several people in her vicinity, including a curate, a governess with two female charges, a broken-English German, and a highly intelligent-looking old gentleman, whose eye seemed to blaze with unqualified appreciation, but who, as it afterward transpired, was deaf and blind. But suddenly another of the sisterhood, who sat opposite, unsuspected up to this time and *incog.*, unmasked herself and came into action, opening fire with an "Ichthyosaurus," and following it up with "Flint-headed Weapons," which staggered the curate, demoralized the pupils, and elicited a long-drawn "So!" from the German. Number One, finding the Death's-head Moth altogether unequal to the position, withdrew it in favor of "Grayvacke," which, to a certain extent, rallied confidence, until "Primeval Man," "the Moabite Stone," and "the Panathenaic Frieze," fired off by Number Two in rapid succession, left Number One

without any following save the appreciative old man. But Number Two did not long continue the heroine of the occasion; for the expansive Briton, expanding theologically, laid an irreverent paw upon the Pentateuch, which roused the meek but true-hearted curate, and in a pause of silence and expectation all the table awaited the encounter between Christian and Apollon. During this pause, when dinner was half achieved, a new arrival again diverted public attention, and concentrated it on very different objects.

The new party was preceded by a gaudy and corpulent courier, who, after questioning the buff-cinctured Jove with an air of impious equality, marshalled his *protégés* to their seats, with looks of scorn and menaces cast on either side, as who should say, "Tremble, O ye base groundlings! the social Juggernaut is upon you." The public, however, paid small attention to this tremendous personage, for all eyes were more pleasantly attracted to the lady and gentleman who followed him. The lady was beautiful. It is a bold assertion, an apple of discord, which we should hesitate to hurl into any assembly on the entrance of any living woman. Did its sculptor succeed in expressing a true ideal of Beauty, or did he only immortalize the Inspid, in the Venus dei Medici? Are Rubens's often-painted wives glorious types of vigorous and beautiful womanhood? or are they only two naked Flemish fish-women, wallowing in a superabundance of garish flesh? Specimens these, selected at random, of the diversities of opinion upon all questions as to beauty depicted by human hands; and how much greater are the diversities when the claims of this or that living woman are *sub lite*! I make, then, a bold assertion; but as the lady is invisible to the reader, I make it boldly, not fearing contradiction, unless, indeed, some may take exception to certain features which I may state to have been distinctive of the fair entrant; sea-gray eyes, to wit—gray or blue, I know not which, but the color of the Mediterranean when the sun has just gone down, and left upon calm waters a *look* between the blue of noontide and the steely sheen that comes on them with the gloaming—sea-gray eyes and bronze-brown hair, a pure complexion, a nose delicately *retroussé*, a mouth like the bow of Cupid, and a figure slight, but genuine and complete; not that composition of door, hay-truss, and pillow, with which art, supplementing natural deficiencies, contrives nowadays to make a travesty of the "human form divine." All these were attributes of the young lady in question; and I trust that, on these simple data, no reader will be captious enough to found a theory that she was not (what I distinctly assert she was and is) beautiful. It is a goodly thing to be beautiful; it is a glorious thing to be young (dwell upon this, rejoice in it, revel in it, O ye young, in the days of your youth!)—but to be both young and beautiful is to be twice blest; and this fortunate lady enjoyed that double beatitude. And, besides all this—an attribute more exquisite still—she possessed that subtle, magical charm which words cannot define, nor art imitate, but which nature, culture, and association, all three, combine to produce, weaving it out of movement, manner, expression, carriage, and I know not what besides, and which can only, but most fee-

bly, be expressed in words by the commonplace phrase, "a thorough-bred air." Many of the guests at the *table-d'hôte* might have been indifferent to her beauty, or denied its existence altogether; but the *air noble* reached them all; so that every eye was turned admiringly in her direction, and the duty of eating strenuously up to a rather high contract price was pretty generally suspended for at least five-and-twenty seconds. Certain eclipses took place. The charms of half a dozen pink-and-white damsels, who looked but now so fresh and bright and pretty, vanished abruptly, just as one has seen a bunch of comely village garden flowers grow coarse and gaudy when placed near some exotic, exquisite in its simple purity of form and hue. As she passed up the hall, the sun offered an inspiration which Raphael might have prized; for the last rays, streaming through the windows, smote upon the deep masses of her burnished hair, and seemed to set a glory round about her small and shapely head.

"A burning beauty!" whispered Tom Wydale.

Cosmo said nothing, but the thought written in his face was, "Oh, *deà certe!*"

"And," said the American, following up a commendatory remark of his own—"and, I guess, the old boss looks like blood and bone, and beans into the bargain."

These irreverent remarks were applied to the gentleman who followed the beautiful apparition. He was a tall old man, with features patrician rather than handsome, and an expression well-bred rather than courteous; in carriage upright, in movement deliberately angular; clear of complexion, with cold blue eyes, and slight but emphatic whiskers; highly collared, amply neckerchiefed; tightly buttoned-up, as to his olive frock-coat—his *ensemble*, in a word, recalling the now extinct grand air of the old school.

His temper was not in a satisfactory condition. He had a grievance, which exploded every now and then in far-reaching fragments of angry sentences, and which proved to be that he was very late for dinner, but by no fault of his own; and the difficulty of bringing the blame home to the real delinquent was that which now exercised his mind. Some men—nurses of their wrath—cannot be satisfied until they get it into the concrete. They can't say, "Confound it!"—they must be able to say, "Confound *him, them, or you!*" The old gentleman was of this nature, and he was hunting for a personality wherewith to connect his grievance. Every one, from his courier and his daughter's maid, had, of course, shifted the blame to some subordinate, so that half the household were implicated, even the hall-porter being entangled in the affair. Several of these officials were brought up for examination in the *table-d'hôte* room, and a sort of running court of inquiry occupied the old gentleman in the intervals between each tepid *plat*. It ended by the summary conviction of the head-waiter, whose lofty bearing had at once inflamed the spirit of the old gentleman, and pointed him out, without further evidence, as the guilty person. So the case was closed by a few powerful observations addressed to that astonished magnate.

"Don't answer me!" cried the angry guest; "it is, as I say, all owing to your abominable carelessness."

"Beg your pardon, my lord; every one knows that the *table-d'hôte* hour—"

"Every one, sir, is a very different person from me and my daughter. I know nothing about your *table-d'hôte*, except that I never saw a worse dinner or more execrable attendance. I shall report this to the direction, and also about your manner, which is distinctly offensive. Go away!"

"Beg pardon, my lord—"

"Go away, sir! get out of my sight!" whereupon the man went, crestfallen; and the American, regarding the old peer with a curious veneration that could hardly have been surpassed on his lordship's own domain, muttered,

"Darned if it ain't *something* to be a lord! A real English lord! They all knock under to *that*. That all-mighty waiter would have laughed at any of your counts or barons. Or even a duke. If he spelled himself D-U-C. But the real article kicks 'em all about."

"After all," smiled his English neighbor, "you see something in our aristocracy."

"Yes, *surr*. Something to be ashamed of. I see something in human natur', too. And I'm ashamed of *that*. Human natur', *surr*, is a born toady. I ain't proud of *that* fact. But that don't prevent me seeing that while it *is* slich, it ain't a bad thing to be a lord. Like the old crocodile over the way. It's better to kick than to be kicked—ain't it? That's sense, I guess. Holloa, waiter! who's the lord?"

The waiter didn't know, and was despatched to the bureau to bring the required information in writing—which being done, the Yankee read the name, and said,

"Wall, I hope Lord Germistoun's property's big. He wants elbow-room. It would take about four of our parishes, I guess, to let him turn in. Without grazing."

The tedious dinner came to a close at last, and the company melted gradually away, to take their coffee *à la fresco* while listening to the band; or to be rowed about upon the lake, in the dreamy twilight between sunset and moonrise. As Cosmo and Tom left the room, they passed close by Lord Germistoun and his daughter, just as his lordship, still unappeased, was remarking,

"The whole thing is distinctly monstrous. They have only now brought me these letters and papers, which have been awaiting us here since yesterday."

"How very tiresome and stupid!" said the young lady; "but I dare say it won't happen again, now they know you."

"I shall take uncommon good care it does not have a chance of happening again, for I will leave the house."

"Dear papa, there is no other hotel."

"Not on this side; but two, at least, at Bel-laggio. Now I propose to be rowed over there this evening, and secure rooms for to-morrow. If I sent that idiot Stefano, he would be sure to make mistakes. Would you care to come? It is a lovely evening, and but a short row. Perhaps you are too tired, though?"

"Not at all; I should like of all things to go with you."

"Very well: if you are ready in half an hour, that will do. The moon is nearly full now, and we need not hurry. In the mean time I will try to get a cup of coffee outside."

CHAPTER II.

THE two friends passed an hour or so lounging by the lake, till the moon began to rise over the hills, and then Cosmo said,

"Behold the hour, and the boat of Pietro! Let us hail him and get aloft. That little breeze, just beginning to arrive from the Engadine, is a godsend, after the stifling heat of the day. Let us get right out into the middle of the lake, and meet it and make the most of it, and see the moon rising. The moonlight effects here are superb; and there is something in this air that makes one appreciative. The moon makes poets of us all down here—the moon and the lake between them."

Cosmo was right. Surely his must be a rusty soul that takes no gleam of radiance and delight from the beautiful communion of the two. Beautiful! There is no word in any language good enough, beautiful enough, to describe it. The moon must be in love with Como. Fancy-free for all the world besides, the "imperial votress" must have bestowed upon that favored lake the solitary passion of her mysterious heart. Is not this why her countenance changes as she passes over these enchanted and enchanting waters? Is not this why the fashion of her beauty there grows softer, tenderer, dreamier? Is it not for this that there she moves with such slow and lingering languor, as all those who, with seeing eyes, have beheld her will attest? Yes, she is in love with Como; and as lovers' faces change at meeting the adored, so is she transfigured when she looks over the hills that shelter the object of her devotion. Lover-like she comes, making the most of her own charms. Lover-like she glorifies the beauties of the beloved with her idealizing light. And oh! most lover-like she moves in that dear presence, slowly, rapt, concentrated—piercing with her glances the solemn depths of the enamored lake, which lies gazing up at her, earnest and silent, needing no voice for a reply; for she can see into that clear, deep heart, and there behold the transcript of her pure and holy flame.

Though "Adam lost Paradise—eternal tale!"—there have still been left to us (few, indeed, and far between), scattered over the face of mother earth, certain spots of heavenly beauty and repose: Edens, the gates of which no flaming swords nor "watch of winged Hydra" guard; where the flowers are not too obviously disfigured by the serpent's trail; where even the spirit of man, if not divine, at least possesses some of the calm, suave attributes of divinity. Surely Lake Como and its margin are of these. The day had been one of sultriest heat, and a kind of thundery silence had brooded over the water, and over all the country round about. Closed jealousies had darkened the faces of the beautiful villas on the lake. The luxuriant creepers, clothing their terrace-walls, hung down limp and dejected, as though trying to reach the water, and find coolness or death therein. The fountains in the gardens seemed to send up languid and unwilling jets, dim to the eye, and with no joyous music for the ear. From Tremezzo to Menaggio, from Bellaggio to Varenna, you might have counted the visible population on your fingers—a few languid forms, motionless for the most part, or only moving a few unwill-

ing paces, to subside again into inevitable stagnation. Not a boat to be seen on the lake save one—a large *contadino* bark laden with market-produce, which put off early from Varenna, but soon gave up the business as hopeless, and lay all day at the opening of Lake Lecco, the motionless cradle of its slumbering crew.

A terribly hot and breathless day it had been; so that when the breeze sprung up at sunset, it was like Nature's sigh of relief after a long ordeal of *ennui* and fatigue—as who should say, "Gone at last!" and then everything awoke and was changed after that. The moon came up and gave her light. The darkened eyes of the villas opened and sent forth their light. The spray of the fountains leaped gayly up and caught the moonbeams and tossed them about, like *genii* playing with handfuls of diamonds. And the flowers, instead of closing their petals, like conventional flowers, must have opened them for the first time that day—so sweet became the night with their breath, so rich with all the fragrances of summer. And from either shore floated tempered strains—the sounds of all manner of musical instruments; and on the lake came airy-looking boats, many gayly illuminated with colored lamps and torches—all vocal, some with melodious laughter, some with the voice of singing. Even the big *contadino* bark, under way again with sail and oar, stole picturesquely and harmoniously along, and the gentle splash of the oars acted as a pleasant symphony to the well-worn but captivating Neapolitan ditty which the rowers sung to the worship and the wooing of the much-hymned "*Marianina*"—

"*Marianina! Marianina!*
Cambia, cambia t'noi pensiero,
Non andar coi bersagliere,
Se ti vuoi maritar!
Se ti vuoi maritar!
Se ti vuoi maritar!
Marianina mia! carina mia!
Dammi un bacio o mi fai morir!"

Upon these waters bathed in the dreamy love-light of the summer moon, and into this scene, worthier of dream-land than the workaday world, the two friends put forth, with no special object to decide the direction of their little boat, save only to get into the middle of the lake. Once there, the breeze met, the point of view reached, Tom Wyedale, who was by no means of a contemplative turn, demanded of his friend whither he should order the boatman to shape his course. Tom, by-the-bye, who erroneously believed himself to know a little Italian, had stipulated that, for practice' sake, he should be allowed on all occasions to act as spokesman.

"It does not matter," said Cosmo: "anywhere."

"That's rather vague."

"Yes, but vagueness is the very thing for a night like this, which would be outraged by anything so prosaic as the definite. Tell the old man to move vaguely and promiscuously about."

"Rather trying to my stock of Italian, which is rather for solid than fancy purposes. *Avanti, Pietro!*"

"*Sì, signore,*" cried the old boatman, plunging his oars with alacrity into the water, and heading away for Bellaggio at racing pace.

"Too fast, too fast!" cried Cosmo. "The old rascal is thinking of that wine-shop under

the colonnade. He has arranged our programme and his own. We are to hang about and listen to the Bellagian band for an hour, while he devotes himself to the dismal wine of the country and that mysterious game of fingers. Stop, stop!"

"*Fermatevi, Pietro!*" cried Tom. "And now, whither?"

"Everywhere."

"*Da per tutto, Pietro.*"

"*Sì, signore;*" and interpreting his instructions to perfection, he subsided into a slow monotonous stroke, and shaped a serpentine course.

"What follows these Italians are, to be sure!" said Cosmo, as a boat-load of minstrels passed at a little distance and filled the air with strains that seemed to interpret the very spirit of the hour and scene. "What an instinctive taste they have! Your English musician would have destroyed everything here by something horribly jerky and jiggling. But these men have woven into their music the moonlight and the orange-trees and the sweetness of orange-blossoms, the bright villas, the pleasant vineyards, the deep woods, the gardens, the sprightly fountains, the melancholy lake, and the happy, languid *far niente* that suits a midsummer night."

"Holloa! I say—"

"This is the very music of a midsummer night's dream. Titania might have been lulled to sleep by it on that delectable bank of wild thyme."

"Come, Cosmo, this is all very hard upon me."

"Yes, to be sure, my dear fellow; a thousand apologies! I was thinking aloud. Pearls are an offense to swine. I'll change the subject."

"It strikes me—all this is very fine, of course—but it strikes me that this same sentiment of yours is rather of a sensual kind. I'll call it sensuous, if you like. You're a sensuous fellow, Cosmo—that's the word."

"Well, I don't object. I quite believe that the great thing in life, so as to get the most out of it, is to be thoroughly adaptive; in a scene like this to be *able* to be 'sensuous'—a sybarite, if you please, without prejudice to my being metaphysical, spiritual, stoical, realistic, positive, and practical—each on the fitting occasion. There is a time for all things. A one-sided man must be constantly out of tune with his surroundings; life has so many phases, and such incessant changes. Therefore, to-night, let me be sensuous—if you please."

"A versatile man never comes to anything."

"An old parrot-cry—and not true; but even if it were true, he would come to nothing, happily—and happiness is the *summum bonum* of my to-night's philosophy, which also forbids me to indulge in prosy speculation; so don't go on with it, you Philistine!"

"You began it."

"Argument of any sort is also impossible, or I would deny it."

"Well, philosophy or not philosophy, it is very jolly out on the lake to-night. I wonder what that pretty girl thinks of it! Also, I wonder if her papa has got over the coldness of the soup and the lukewarmness of the attendance!"

"Pretty! Do you call her *pretty*?"

"Yes, I do, most emphatically. What! you don't mean to say that you don't admire her?"

"No, I mean to say nothing of the sort—but *pretty!* How like you that is, Tom! I would not insult beauty of that type by calling it possessor pretty. There is an elevation, a soul, a purity, in her beauty that I have seldom, if ever, seen before in a human face. I know a picture for which she might have sat. I have not seen it for years, but it has always haunted me. It is, or was, in an obscure little Italian village perched away up in the hills above the Riviera. Some old cardinal, who was born there, left it, with the rest of his collection, to his native place. It is a Madonna, by Sasso Ferrato; not a replica of any of his well-known pictures, but a unique original—different altogether from any of his other Madonnas, yet authentic, and of extraordinary beauty and grace. The moment I saw this young lady, I was reminded of it. It is my beau-ideal of female loveliness. When I first saw the picture I was reminded of the verse,

'The starlike beauty of immortal eyes.'

When I have thought of the picture, I have always thought of the phrase. To-night I have seen the conception of the painter realized; and in mortal eyes I have beheld the starlike beauty of which the poet dreamed."

"My dear Cosmo, this is a very desperate state of things. You must really take more exercise, and get up early in the morning. I have been suspecting for some time that there is a slight tendency to hepatitis. Do you remember poor Oliver Lee? He died of it, you know, and was really comforted for his mortal sickness by its big name. He insisted on it always, and was continually checking off his symptoms—'clouded vision, morbid fancies, loss of appetite, noises in the head, insomnia,' etc. These were some of them; and I do think, Cosmo, that the vision must be clouded and the fancy morbid which transforms the *beauté de diable* into divine loveliness."

"*Beauté de diable!* I suppose you think you've achieved a neat antithesis, but you're wrong; for between the *beauté de diable* and divine beauty there is the same connection as there is between the beauty of innocence and the beauty of holiness."

"Oh, this is terrible! Pray be sensuous again; it's better than being metaphysical, after a *table-d'hôte* dinner. I suppose, then, you have fallen in love with the Madonna at first sight?"

"The reasoning of a chamber-maid! Well, even if I *had* fallen in love with her, it would not be at first sight, for in seeing her to-night I only see the figure of the picture in a new *pose*, with a change of drapery, in a different light. Perhaps I *am* in love with the ideal which the picture suggests; if so, I shall certainly be faithful to it, for the ideal never disappoints, and the real generally does so. Therefore I would rather avoid this young lady."

"Ha! ha! ha! ho! he!—also hum!"

"If she were to fulfil the promise of the picture, it would be something like the story of Pygmalion and Galatea coming true. That is not a likely occurrence. No; were she never so charming, she would fail to reach the perfection which Sasso Ferrato has helped her to conceive. It would be impossible not to associate her real qualities with my ideal; and since, as I say, the real almost inevitably disappoints, my beautiful

illusion would be dissipated and my idol shattered. I shall be careful not to come in contact with the young lady."

"Well, I am sure I have no objection; and, to tell you the truth, it just occurs to me that I may as well fall in love with her myself. I have not adventured in that line as yet; but I dare say I might succeed, because I am so 'adaptive,' as you call it; and there would be a dramatic propriety in being in love on Lake Como, which I am not insensible to. Besides, there's nothing else to do here but smoke and loll about on the lake; and I dare say both these occupations would gain by a flavor of the tender passion. Yes, Cosmo, consider me in love, until further instructions, and respect me accordingly—no *brusquerie*, no roughness with the blossom which now begins to expand before your eyes."

"You in love? You?"

"I—even I. You ought to be immensely obliged to me. You're out of the running, you know, and evidently developing into a bard. It will be a godsend to you to watch the affair. Besides, you will be of serious service in gooseberry-picking; and you are just the man to *intriguer* that combustible old gentleman—you're so 'adaptive' and 'many-sided,' don't you see?"

"Well, I can conceive many things, but not Tom Wyedale as the hero of a love-romance."

"Nothing happens but the improbable, my boy; and if there are a few deficiencies in my composition, you can idealize me, you know. With your talent, I think you ought to turn out of this material a very first-class sort of hero."

"Somehow I don't see it."

"Ah! you do us both injustice."

"I could hardly give romantic attributes to a round of beef or a pot of porter."

"You wrong me, Cosmo—you wrong me; but it is the old story. A great man's school-fellows are notoriously the last to recognize his great qualities. The school-dunce develops into an intellectual giant, but his early brother-dunces can never forget the fool's-cap which he shared with them. I forgive you, old man."

"Very good of you; but I can't say I remember that interesting bond between you and me."

"Likely enough; memory plays sad pranks in such matters."

"I can remember, however, that *you* were the biggest dunce in your form."

"Imagination in fault this time; it constantly clouds the memory."

"I don't think I require to call upon my memory, or use the past tense, in speaking of your dunce-ship."

"Hepatitis! hepatitis! Clouded vision, morbid fancies, noises in the head. We must have you overhauled. There is a manslayer in the hotel; consult him."

"Hang it, Tom, what a bore you are! I feel so tired of you sometimes, it appears to me a mystery how we are such friends."

"Candid friend! it is difficult to say how it should be so. The general rules are horribly contradictory. Like draws to like; but, then, contrasts fascinate each other. Perhaps the endearing ties in this case are gratitude on your part, and a sense of protectorship on mine—continued from earliest youth until now."

"As how?"

"How? Why, who licked Jack Falls for bullying you?"

"I don't remember; probably I licked him myself."

"You! Why, Jack could have eaten you. Who supplied you with cricket-bats, like a brother?"

"No one did. I remember your giving me a bat for my silver chain and my white mouse that had one eye pink and the other green; but the handle of the bat turned out to be sprung."

"Well, hang it! I gave you back the mouse, although I was devoted to it."

"Yes, you gave it me back to avoid a swishing, when white mice were forbidden under penalties. And then, when the holidays came—although I had run the risk of keeping it all the half—you pretended you had only lent it to me, to oblige me, and wanted to take it back."

"Oh, I can't go back upon all these trumpery little details! I only remember that I was excessively generous to you about a mouse or mice and cricket-bats."

"Generous?"

"Yes; and then the verses."

"I suppose you'll say next that you wrote mine for me."

"By no means; that would have been a doubtful kindness. No; I frequently allowed you to write mine for me, which was glorious practice for a little fellow—upon my word, it was quite fatherly of me. And then that row about Mother Willet's orchard, when I saved you—and—these and a hundred other little kindnesses, I suppose, must have stamped themselves into the plastic nature of your youth, and have been confirmed in manhood by the sense of protection which an unpractical (shall I say a weaker?) nature derives from association with one which is practical and philosophically robust. That, I take it, is the explanation from your point of view; and from mine, it is, of course, not wonderful to find a generous spirit attaching itself to the object of its protection and generosity."

"And looking out watchfully, no doubt, for fresh opportunities of exercising these qualities?"

"Most distinctly. I will be true to my mission, Cosmo. Lean upon me; I won't desert you."

"Now, Tom, you villain, I don't like this vein at all. I seem to remember similar flourishes in connection with certain financial embarrassments, which always ended in being rather embarrassing to myself. Upon my honor, now, I shouldn't be a bit surprised to find that there was a temporary difficulty about a hotel bill, or a temporary but equally pressing necessity for two or three hundred pounds."

"My dear Cosmo, nor I! What intuitions the fellow has at times, to be sure! To tell you the truth, my banker is not a very good fellow."

"No?"

"No, not at all. I may say I'm ashamed of him. He can never see more than one side of a question, and his view of that is limited and groovy. Now, a banker ought not to be groovy, ought he?"

"Perhaps not."

"No. Grooviness is inconsistent with the elevated intelligence which one has a right to expect in a banker. Just listen to a case in point. I—"

Tom's statement, however, was interrupted by a shout from a boat at a little distance. The two friends had been rowed down near to the Isola di San Giovanni; there they had turned, and, after sweeping close in to the Bellagian shore, were now slowly heading for home. The boat which hailed was behind them, motionless, and no other boats were in the neighborhood.

"They must be hailing us," said Cosmo.

"Tourists full of new wine," replied Tom. "Let them howl."

The shout was repeated. Cosmo was for retreating. "Something may be wrong," he said.

"Let them rave. *Avanti!*" quoth Tom.

Then, as they got under way again, the cry was repeated with such energy that it became clear that something was the matter, and they turned back. As they approached the boat, a sharp English voice upbraided them, in fierce, broken Italian, for their tardiness; but as they were all still under the shadow of the hills, the speaker was unrecognizable.

"*Subito! subito!*" replied old Pietro, leisurely paddling along.

"*Subito!* D—n it! do you call *that subito?*" cried the voice.

"*Subito! subito!—pazienza! pazienza! che va piano va lontano,*" said, or rather sung, the grinning boatman, as though soothing an impatient child; and then, easing his oars as he ran along-side, "*Eccoci, signore!*"

"It is the '*beauté de diable*' and her papa, as I am a living, loving sinner," whispered Tom. "How prompt is the arrow of Fate!"

"You are English gentlemen, I presume," said Lord Germistoun—for it was he—"and I do think you might have been a little readier to answer my cry for assistance."

"But what is the matter, sir?" asked Tom.

"Matter, sir? Drowning's the matter—that's all." He then explained that the boatman had snapped one of his oars, and in jumping up to try to rescue the half which fell into the water, had sent "his great blundering foot through one of the rotten planks; and the boat's filling—that's all!"

"We had no conception that there was anything seriously wrong," said Tom.

The old lord then tartly suggested transshipment instead of conversation. "If you will put us on shore anywhere at Bellaggio, we can get another boat. Our destination is Cadenabbia; but don't let us inconvenience you."

"Our way would be yours, in any case," said Cosmo, addressing the lady; "but, as it happens, we also are bound for Cadenabbia."

The transshipment then took place, and the damaged boat was taken in tow, her boatman continuing in her, and indignantly denying any danger. Tom contrived to dispose the new guests so that he sat between the young lady and her father. And now he began to play off a little comedy for the amusement of his friend; and falling into the rôle which he had prescribed for himself in his farcical conversation a few minutes before, proceeded to dramatize the part of the "aspirant" who, in "sapping up to a position," makes almost as much love to the lady's belongings as to herself. Cosmo, who knew the "devilry" of which his friend was capable, feared he might overdo the part. The gravity of his face and manner were, however, unim-

peachable; and all his attentions, divided pretty equally between father and daughter, passed muster in the most creditable way. Cosmo was very far from approving of a joke of the sort, and he soon had fresh cause for disapproval and annoyance; for Tom, out of pure wantonness, began to drag his name in, in such a way as to throw discredit upon him, and in such a way as, antithetically, to suggest his own superior merit in all respects.

"I cannot," he said to the young lady, "sufficiently blame myself for not insisting on our immediate return. My friend is a little obstinate, but I ought to have combated him. He *would* have it that the cry came from some party of tourists who had been—had been—a—dining somewhere. The tone of voice ought to have been sufficient for him. To *me* it was unmistakably the cry of a gentleman in distress. I ought to have been firm with him."

This spirited perversion of facts brought Lord Germistoun to the field at once. "Your friend's scepticism," he said, with a very grim look at Cosmo, "might have had disastrous results for us. He might have been willing to give us the benefit of the doubt, I think."

Cosmo was about to reply, when the young lady interposed. "I am sure," she said, that you came as quickly as possible. Papa, you are really too *exigeant*. The accident seems scarcely to have happened, and here we are, safe and sound, on board another boat. Papa is too *exigeant*," she continued, with a laugh; "but you must make allowance for him. He has had a sad chapter of accidents to-day. Have you not, papa?"

"Accidents? I don't call them accidents," snorted the old lord; "downright, deliberate insolence and mismanagement—these are not accidents. Would you believe it, sir, I was made twenty-five minutes late for dinner to-day by false information?"

"Yes, I observed that you came in late for dinner," said Tom, in a voice of sweetest sympathy; and I feared there had been some of the usual negligence. In fact, I think I said to my friend, 'Here is the old, old story again; it is really getting too insufferable.'"

"Ah! you confirm me?"

"Indeed I do."

"And then, that head-waiter!"

"Oh! *he*?—he is notoriously an impostor."

"And his insolence!"

"Insolence! Now, I dare say he answered you?"

"Ah! that he did, and most improperly."

"There, Cosmo!" said Tom, turning to his friend with the air of a man who, after a protracted controversy, at length finds an argument which gives him the victory beyond dispute—"there, Cosmo! I suppose you won't support your friend after *that*;" and then, before Cosmo had time to say anything, "To *me*, that man is the incarnation of stupid impertinence. If it had not been for my friend here, I would have brought the matter to a point long ago by going frankly to the direction, and simply saying, 'Either that head-waiter is dismissed, or I leave the hotel.'"

"Quite right—quite right!" cried the old gentleman; "and I'd have done it myself—I'd have done it myself. Then, they keep back the let-

ters, and have no excuse to make. The porter—"

"Oh, the porter! simply a *crétin*."

"And what business have they to employ *crétins*?"

"Part of the system—part of the system."

"So it would seem; and it's no better over here. I have just been over to the Serbellone to look for rooms; and there, I protest to you, I was treated like—like a scavenger. I said the rooms smelled of rats. The manager denied this brusquely; said it had been the *château* of a *grand seigneur*, and *couldn't* smell of rats. I told him that I believed the walls were lined with dead rats; that the floors and the roofs were full of them; and that if there were no living ones there, it was simply because the house was crumbling to pieces with dry-rot, and going to fall. The manager then requested me to leave the premises—*me*—actually—in so many words, and stated that in no case should I have rooms. I gave him my name, which produced no sort of effect. I said I would expose him. He replied that that was my affair, and a matter of complete indifference to him, and I was, as nearly as possible, hustled out of the house. Now, did you ever hear anything half so monstrous?—did you ever? did you ever? did you ever? Eh? hum? what?"

Tom received this tale of wrong with immense sympathy, interjecting little groans of indignation at critical parts.

"I think," continued the old gentleman, "the whole place seems to have changed. Twenty years ago it was charming; but there is a sort of an infernal democratic twang about it now that upsets me—upsets me. Don't you see a change?"

"Oh, certainly; nothing could be more marked," replied Tom, who had seen the lake for the first time one week before. "It's all deteriorated—sadly deteriorated," he added, with a comprehensive wave of his hand, which appeared to include the whole district, and even the lake and the sky, in the condemnation of being ratted and of having a democratic twang.

The old gentleman was greatly mollified by all this sympathy; but addressed himself exclusively to Tom, who had contrived, out of sheer wanton fun, to put his friend in the light of a malefactor.

"It is very disappointing," said the young lady. "We intended to enjoy ourselves so much here, and now all these *contretemps* have darkened our prospects."

"You are not disappointed in the beauty of the lake, I am sure?" said Cosmo, who had hitherto kept silence, and was now immediately rewarded by a furtive kick from his friend, meant to imply that he must not trespass on another man's preserves.

"No, indeed," was the reply; "I never, even in my dreams, saw anything half so lovely."

Tom made rather a floundering attempt to construct a gallant speech on these premises, and the lady went on:

"One could not say too much in its praise; or rather, perhaps, one cannot say too little. There are some things that seem to be above the power of words."

"Things that ought only to be painted, you mean," said Tom; "and you are an artist, without doubt?"

"Oh, in a very, very humble way; but papa *really* is."

"Oh, how I envy him!" cried Tom, with rapture. "This must be an artist's paradise—points of view from land and water at discretion, unrivalled effects of light and shade, *and—and—all* that sort of thing," including another kick for Cosmo. "You won't allow these mishaps to drive you away *immediately*?" he continued, with much earnestness.

"Ah! I don't know; papa *must* be comfortable, and—"

"And *will* be so, my dear," interposed her father; "and is certainly not going to be hunted out of the place by a pack of innkeepers. No, no."

"Bravo!" murmured Tom.

"I'm situated in this way," continued Lord Germistoun—"Gull has ordered me to the Engadine. Why Gull has ordered me to the Engadine, I dare say Gull doesn't know himself—I don't; but doctors are tyrants, and these are my tyrant's orders. Now, it seems one can't go up there for a month to come, on account of the hard weather in the mountains, and I had decided to spend that month here—and *here I will* spend it; and I'll tell you what it is, since there is no hotel fit for a gentleman to live in, I'll take a villa. That will be a lesson for them. Yes, I'll take a nice little villa to-morrow morning—eh? hum? what?"

"I fear," said Tom, "it may be rather difficult to find one for so short a time, and at such short notice."

"Excuse me, I think not. There may, perhaps, be difficulties; but they shall be overcome. I'll take a nice little villa to-morrow morning. What?"

"Papa is a most determined character, you must know. He would rather buy a villa or build one than be beaten."

"I generally contrive to have my own way, Esmé, as you know."

"Oh yes, dear papa, I *do* know; only too well sometimes," she added, with a laugh. "You are a most formidable person when thwarted; but on this occasion I applaud your firmness—a little selfishly, perhaps—for I am so glad we are to stay on in this lovely place."

"It will be an example to them," chuckled Lord Germistoun. "I'll take a nice little villa in the morning." He gloated over the idea, which had only occurred to him in the course of the conversation, and which seemed to offer a pleasant salve of vengeance for his outraged dignity.

"You must immortalize the lake with your pencil," said Tom to the lady.

"Oh no; but papa may. Indeed, he has a large portfolio of sketches done here years ago. They first made me wish to come here."

Then Tom fell to cunning questioning as to the views selected, expressing a burning curiosity to know how this and that subject had been treated, the conditions of light at the time, and so forth, invariably pronouncing the old gentleman's artistic selection to have been precisely what it ought to have been, and generally surrounding him with such a comfortable atmosphere of appreciation and applause, that, when the boat reached the shore, he was in high good-humor. "Most agreeable, gentlemanlike fel-

low," he murmured to his daughter; "must make his acquaintance formally." Then turning to the two friends, he thanked them very courteously for the service they had rendered, and even went so far as to hint at a vague regret for having been betrayed into impatient language at the moment of rescue. "Let me offer you my card," he said, in conclusion; "I am Lord Germistounne." The friends having duly handed over theirs in return, were presented, with considerable pomp and ceremony, to "My daughter, Miss Douglas." It then occurred to Lord Germistounne that Mr. Wyedale's name was familiar to him. "It reminds me," he said, "of one of my oldest and dearest friends. We sat in the House of Commons together for years, when he was member for —shire. Was he a relation of yours?"

"He was my uncle," said Tom.

"Indeed! Then I am doubly pleased to make your acquaintance. Poor Tom Wyedale! what a witty dog he was, to be sure! Quite one of the best of us. And ah, what a Tory! He would have had Peel hanged for his Corn-law treachery, if he could. Ah! a fine fellow, Tom. He left no children, I think?"

"No, his only son died."

"And Lady Mary?"

"She is very well, thank you."

"And the Abbey?—Wyedale Abbey?—that went to—to—not to you?"

"Alas! no; a brother darkened my life by getting into the light in front of me."

"Ha, ha! Well, we can't all hope to be eldest sons. What?"

"No; my aspirations would have been much more easily satisfied."

"That reminds me of poor Tom. Well, shall we say 'good-night,' or will you come up to our quarters and have a cup of tea, and take a look at these sketches we've been talking about?"

Tom gladly assented, and the old lord led the way to his apartment, explaining that the rooms (which were really the best in the house, and entirely charming) were detestable; but that, after to-morrow, he hoped to receive his friends more becomingly. "For"—and here he repeated the formula about the nice little villa, which seemed to have captivated him like the refrain of a pleasant song.

CHAPTER III.

Tom's conduct in the boat was, of course, merely meant to amuse his friend, as the dramatic sequel of their previous conversation, by a representation, as has been said, of the crafty approaches of a politic lover. As far as his friend was concerned, however, the humor of the caprice had missed fire. Cosmo was anything but pleased with it. Punctiliously polite to strangers himself, his temper had been somewhat ruffled by the brusqueness of Lord Germistounne's first greeting; it had been progressively disturbed by Tom's persistent method of dragging him forward in a false light, and by the distinct manner in which Lord Germistounne seemed to ignore his existence. Moreover, this poking of fun at total strangers (one of whom was a lady), all unwitting though they were, appeared to him im-

proper and impertinent; and the poking of fun at himself, except in private, was by no means to his taste. From all this it resulted that Cosmo had fallen into a very considerable state of dignity, and would have excused himself stiffly from accepting the invitation to the Germistounne apartment. Miss Douglas, however, divining, with feminine tact, that something was amiss, and attributing it to its true cause, or partly so, seconded the invitation with a simple heartiness that made refusal impossible, and Cosmo followed her.

And now came Tom's retribution. The portfolio of sketches was his Nemesis—a huge portfolio filled to overflowing with indifferent performances, through which he had to wade at solemn pace and slow. For the artist stood by him, and saw that there was no evasion—haranguing upon each "bit," bewildering his victim with strange art jargon, and keeping him alert by sudden appeals and subtle pauses for notes of admiration. There was no escape for poor Tom, who knew as much about water-colors as a Choctaw Indian, and was wont to confess that he liked to take the beauties of nature "with an object," and with special reference to Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood. But, with a desperate resignation, he went manfully through to the end of a long hour and a half. Anathemas rose in his heart, mingled with poignant yearnings for tobacco and cool tankards; but he suppressed them all, and sat yawnless and smiling, and the winner of golden opinions from his host—richly deserved, indeed; for he who can drink to the dregs that "drowsiest sirup of the world"—the prongs of an egotistical dilettante—and, drinking, seem to like it, has fortitude enough to win a martyr's crown.

Meantime, and thus, it so fell out that Cosmo was exemplifying the vanity of human wishes. Scarcely two hours before, he had expressed a resolution to avoid contact with Miss Douglas, and now he was involuntarily engaged with her in a *tête-à-tête* of formidable length. The situation might have been decidedly romantic—ought, indeed, so to have been. The coincidence of the picture's resemblance—there was a romantic element; and, coupled with it, the virtual saving of the young lady's life—there was another. Then, her extreme beauty would have shed a halo over circumstances infinitely more prosaic; and what stage, what *mise en scène*, could surpass the Lake of Como, with all its accessories of night, summer, and the moon? But, alas! "the romantic" visits us only as the angels of the proverb do. Too seldom does it drop on our daily lives; and though, like some gossamery woof of magic tints, it then draws over every rugged angle the "softening folds of a gracious drapery," it remains but for an instant, and vanishes so abruptly that we scarcely wot of the beauty that has been on us and about us till the glory has departed. It is dissipated by a breath, and by none more surely than the whisper of an incongruous association; and, by some psychological law, those who are most susceptible of a romantic impression have also usually the keenest perceptions of the incongruous. Thus, Tom Wyedale's rollicking conversation in the boat, and his Philistine tone about the young lady herself, had brushed away, for his friend, all romance from the events of the evening.

To Cosmo the little drama presented itself in no ethereal aspect. The whole thing had simply irritated him. Sensitive by nature, and somewhat shy, his manner to strangers was marked at best by a certain reserve and stateliness that were scarcely prepossessing; and at present he was angry with Tom, offended with Lord Germistoun, vexed with himself, and almost displeased with Miss Douglas herself—though why, it would have been difficult to say, except, indeed, for bringing him, against his will, into that contact with herself which, perhaps in scant earnest, he had announced his intention of avoiding. This complication was certainly not likely to subdue his natural characteristics; so that Miss Douglas might have been pardoned if, at first, she had rather repented the warmth of her invitation, and felt that the task of entertaining the guest who fell to her charge was more formidable than pleasant. At first it certainly appeared to be so, for Cosmo seemed to be bereft of all power of conversational initiative, and even in response he was sluggish and frozen. Miss Douglas, as the daughter of Lord Germistoun, a wealthy and well-known peer, was presumably of the London world; Cosmo himself was more or less of the same world; and that two such people should be together in a *tête-à-tête*, and be in want of topics of conversation, even for a minute, might well seem an unaccountable phenomenon. The mere routine work of each season produces, for a certain class of society, topics enough to supply with the materials of many hours' dialogue the most brainless he or she who drifts through the regulation amount of duty or pleasure prescribed by the rubric of fashion. The veriest parrot, from the blessed iteration of the same phrases (if not ideas), heard hourly for three or four solid months, can scarcely fail to have glibly on the tip of his tongue sufficient small-change of talk to pay his way without difficulty among the initiated. And then there are always one or two great salient events in the history of each season, which, independent of the smaller gossip, fend off from the talker the necessity of plunging, without a cork-jacket, into the hopeless waters of originality.

Let us cast back an eye over the last few seasons: at once it is struck by a dozen things of the sort. For instance, a royal savage—the blacker the better—visits the country, and reduces the nation to a state of infantile imbecility. In his honor there are court entertainments, where he is puzzled; and municipal banquets, where his inner man is compromised; a review at Windsor, where he is again puzzled; an exhibition of iron-clads, where he is frightened and again sick. What a fund of topics in all this! What possibilities of earnest question and response! Were you there? Were you? Had you the *entrée* to the privileged places? Did you see him? Is it true that he was sulky and rude? Can it be conceivable that his teeth chattered? Then the Duchess of —, in giving a fancy ball, supplies another fertile theme. It was beautiful, but she gave it too late or too early. It clashed with the *festa* of some other potentate. Such a pity! And was royalty *really* offended or not? If so, why?—if not, why not? Then the prince's garden-party: if you were at it, it is well; if not, still it is well, for much time can be consumed in giving every reason but the

true one for your absence. The Academy has a sensation-picture, painted by a girl blind from her birth. Here art talk *à discretion*. She is equal to Salvator Rosa, or Horace Vernet, or Paul Potter, or any other painter—no matter whom—to whom the *vox populi* has taught you to liken her. There is a new reading of "Hamlet" by a Hindoo, which (in Hindostanee) edifies society. Such a mellifluous language, Hindostanee! So perfect a vehicle for Shakspearian thought! Some curled darling of society cheats at cards or helps himself to his neighbor's wife. Here is breathless interest! Why did he do it? When? How? Where? What does Sir John say to it? Will the countess *ever* get over the shock? Moral—how can people do such things? Some one else who ought to have known better commits some other *faux pas*, scarcely discussible, but which can be sniffed round with titillating innuendoes and low confidential murmurings. Burnand has a new farce, the scream of which has been loud enough to cross the Channel and be echoed in Paris. Doubtless you have heard it in both languages? Offenbach outdoes himself in a new *opéra bouffe*, "Suzanne et les Vieillards." A little shocking, is it not? but then so bright and clever! That atones for most things. And then comes the "music of the future," and sets the whole queer jumble to appropriate strains. You heard "Lohengrin"? You *did*? It was a perfect enigma to you, or entirely comprehensible. You sat through the *whole* of that first suffocating night? to the end? and wished for more? No wonder! Or wished yourself dead? How natural!

People who have these and a hundred kindred and equally welcome topics freely at command ought not to be in much danger of having to hazard an original thought, or of having to pause in an unbroken stream of well-worn but still serviceable platitudes. And then there is in reserve the gossip of "Prince's," "Hurlingham," and Cowes; the ordinary *on dits* about ordinary marriages, scandals, scrapes, flirtations, and what not. So that, altogether, there is surely more than enough, when the season is over, to carry one on from August till April—provided, of course, there is an occasional change in the scene of one's platitudinizing. Cosmo, however, availed himself of none of these resources. He had entered the room, as we have seen, with ruffled plumage; but surely his good-breeding could not possibly permit him to sulk in a *tête-à-tête* with a lady who was doing her best to entertain him? No. Well, he was not sulky, but he was sombre; and that, with his natural shyness, had dammed up his ideas. Then, every moment he was with Miss Douglas deepened his impression of her wonderful resemblance to the Sasso Ferrato Madonna, preoccupying him at first, and then making him feel—fancifully enough, to be sure—that ordinary topics of conversation were unsuitable in the presence of one about whom clung so many suggestions far removed from the *banalité* of common life. Miss Douglas, on her side, bravely struggled with difficulties; but neither did she avail herself of the dreary reserve of London small talk. She had, in truth, been but one season—that of her *début*—two years before, in town; so that her resources in that respect could neither have been many nor recent. Had it been otherwise, perhaps Cosmo's tongue would

have been earlier untied, because Sasso Ferrato's Madonna would have ceased to embarrass him.

She and her father had been great travellers; for the old lord—being half invalid, half valetudinarian—required perpetual change of scene, and frequent visits to those numerous health resorts, scattered all over that large portion of Europe which is now included in the map of the invalid. In this way, there were few places in Europe of great interest which she had not visited; and a splendid collection of photographs, which lay on the table, contained souvenirs of everything beautiful and noteworthy which she had herself seen. Upon this book, as an aid in her difficulty, she fell back; and, since Cosmo had also travelled much, she was able for a time, without seeming to lecture, to carry on a tolerably one-sided conversation.

Her manner was singularly unaffected and simple; and a certain freshness of appreciation made her remarks, on what she had really liked and admired, original and striking. By degrees Cosmo was thoroughly thawed; and catching the infection of an enthusiasm which was by no means foreign to his own nature, he began to exchange experiences and sentiments with her, with an earnestness and volubility which, if they had suddenly broken forth from the ice of man of half an hour ago, would have suggested magical transformation. But he, indeed, must have been of the earth earthy who could have recalled, in company with a sympathetic spirit, yet without some enthusiasm, the memories which this book awakened. For there was the Parthenon, shattered, despoiled, but peerless still in its beauty, and glorious in its suggestions of a panorama instinct with the genius of the Golden Age. And there were the Pyramids, from which even the tourist cannot hunt the mystery and awe of the early world; the Mount of Olives, where Reverence feels that in no language it dare utter its emotions; the Pincian Hill, where History seems to stagger under the burden of its records; the Golden Horn and the Golden Shell; the beautiful illusions of Stamboul, the wondrous realities of Syracuse, the weird resurrections of Pompeii, and the sunny life of Sorrento. From one to the other they passed, and through the quaint portals of many a rare old town of Germany and Holland, and by many a venerable monument of pious art, and up the castled Rhine, through the land of legendary lore, and on into the splendid wilderness of Alp and glacier. People who had beheld such scenes with seeing eyes, who had thought in them, felt in them, received some of their inspirations, and learned a few of their myriad lessons, and who had before them such aids to memory as this book contained, had assuredly small need to fall back for topics upon the dwarfed and dwarfing life of modern society. The photograph-book proved an entirely successful stratagem of despair, which very soon changed into lively pleasure and interest, so that all sombre clouds were dissipated. But the conversation was by no means all pitched in a transcendental or earnest key. It was constantly relieved by humorous reminiscences, which this or that scene recalled. Esmè proved to be full of fun; she was as eager and fresh in that respect as in more serious matters, and passed from one phase to the other with a certain quaint *naïveté* which ought to

have been wholly captivating to Cosmo, had he not been a little doubtful as to the fitness of such characteristics in one who wore the outward semblance of his idealized Madonna.

The time began to pass quickly—even too quickly.

At last there was but one more photograph to look at.

"There!" she said, as she turned it over, "the last of my photographs, but to me the most beautiful—at least, I am bound to say so; that is my home."

"It is beautiful," replied Cosmo, "and a capital photograph; for I know the place well. I can't be mistaken. It is Dunerlacht Castle?"

"Yes. I think it is very good; even papa is pleased with it. The old part of the house comes out wonderfully; and the shadow on the water is so natural, is it not? And your travels have actually carried you up to our fastnesses?"

"Yes. I had to pass Dunerlacht pretty often a year or two ago. I had a shooting in—shire, not very far from you—Glenmoira."

"Oh, we know it very well! Some friends of ours used to have it. It is a charming little place. How lucky you were to have Glenmoira! How did you like it?"

"I was delighted with it."

"And you like Scotland?"

"Yes; indeed, very much more than most other places."

"Now I am quite sure that your taste is admirable, although I don't the least agree with you about Interlachen or the Giessbach."

"Are you as enthusiastic about Scotland as about Switzerland?"

"Oh yes—more so; but it is a different kind of enthusiasm—just as I might be very enthusiastic about a friend, but still more so about papa, you know."

"Yes—the fatherland, of course, ought to be before all others; and, indeed, I suppose I ought to have the same sort of filial feeling to Scotland."

"What! are you a Scotchman?" cried Esmè.

"Perhaps I should rather say of Scotch descent," replied Cosmo, with some embarrassment.

"Oh, your family have deserted the beloved country—long ago?"

"I—I—really don't quite know—some time—a generation or two, I believe."

Not to know the history and movements of one's ancestors for several hundred years struck Esmè as astonishing in one of gentle blood; but there was something in Cosmo's manner which told her that the subject was unpleasant to him, although he had himself introduced it, and so she abandoned it, merely asking him if he had given up his visits to Scotland as a sportsman.

"No," replied Cosmo, "not in theory, although in practice, since the year before last; but I am half thinking of going back this year; and, indeed, I have been in treaty for another moor—in a different county, however. But I scarcely think it will suit."

"I hear your friend talking about Scotland," said the old lord, who had by this time come to the end of his art treasures; "and, by-the-by, who is your friend? His name puzzles me. It is Scotch, and it isn't Scotch. That is, it is the name of a locality, and the title of a dormant

Scotch peerage; but there is certainly no *gentleman's* family of that name in the country. Where does this gentleman come from?"

"Well, do you know, it *is* odd, but I can't tell you, except in a very hazy way. Cosmo and I were at Eton and a private tutor's together, and then at Cambridge, and we have been fast friends all our lives; but, as we used to say at school, I don't 'know him at home.'"

"Ah! by-the-bye, there is a Glencairn, the great capitalist and speculator. I know a good deal about him—a rough, vulgar dog; but I believe he is unmarried. You don't know who your friend's father is?"

"Well, I know one excellent trait in his father's character—he is immensely rich. I believe he made his fortune in the City; but he retired from business long ago (which is also to his credit), and lives in the wilds somewhere in the West of England. Glencairn has never asked me there, although I constantly go to his own shooting. I fancy his father is peculiar—probably mad, or something of the sort. He seldom speaks of him, although I know he goes to see him regularly. That's about all I know of the family. As to Glencairn's nationality, I never thought of that, except, of course, I supposed he was an Englishman; but he might have been a Kaffir by extraction, for anything he has ever said to me on the subject. He is rather reserved on some subjects, although the best fellow in the world when you know him, and immensely clever. His regiment used to swear by him, and a mess is generally not far wrong about a fellow's character."

"Oh! he was in the army?"

"Yes; he was a captain in the ——— Dragoon Guards."

"He doesn't strike me as exactly one's idea of the 'darling of the mess.'"

"Ah, well, but he was."

"The ——— Dragoon Guards, you say?"

"Yes."

"Hum! I think I have heard that that regiment recruits its officers in the City very much."

"Oh no. There are some rich fellows in it of that sort; but, City or not City, I don't know a better lot in the service. They used to be, at least, when Cosmo was in them."

"Well, I should have thought he was rather conceited and stiff to be a regimental favorite in a first-class corps. Only my own impression—only my own first impression. You are not in the service?"

"No; I am a retired diplomatist," replied Tom, with a grin.

"Rather an early retreat, is it not?"

"Yes, perhaps; but I wanted a career; and if a fellow wants a career, F. O. is not likely to give it him, either at home or abroad."

"And so you left it?"

"And so I left it."

"And the career?"

"Ah! the career? Well, I begin to think a career is a mistake. I see fellows with careers not half so jolly as I am. There's Gerald St. Clair—now, there's an example. That fellow was always talking about it. He had career on the brain, I believe, and he put a lot of that sort of stuff into my head at Cambridge. 'You must have a horizon,' he used to say. Well, there he is in the House—has been in it for five years—

and he has done nothing. On committees all day, and in his place all night, with lots to say, but never allowed to say it. I don't call *that* jolly. His time, he says, hasn't come. He must walk to his career over the dead bodies of a score or two of second-rate prosers, who won't die for thirty years. An obstruction like that prevents one from seeing much horizon. I think Gerald has put his foot in it. That's my idea."

"If every one thought as you do, we should be rather short of ministers."

"Oh no; you can always get lots of 'mid-dling seconds'—quite good enough for the business nowadays."

"Ha, ha! you take a low view of ministerial qualifications. Perhaps you don't know that I have been in office myself?"

"Oh, of course I do. Who doesn't? But that was in the good times. Yet even *you* left it, though you had everything before you—something like a career indeed."

"Health, health," said the old gentleman, greatly delighted; he had once been, for six months, an under-secretary in an asthmatic coalition Government, which had been born moribund and expired within a year. "Health is a worse obstruction than a phalanx of prosy seniors. But then you had the Church or the Bar, fairly unobstructed for a young fellow of talent and interest."

"No, I didn't fancy the Bar, and I'm pretty sure the Church would not have fancied me—a case of mutual incompatibility, probably."

"And so," said Lord Germistoun, blending the elements of a yawn with a look of amusement—"and so here you are."

"And so here I am; but I am certain I ought not to be here any longer—it is fearfully late. We are keeping you out of bed most unconscionably."

"Don't mention it—don't mention it. Ah! dear me, it is late. Well, I hope you'll come again and help me to kill an hour or two as pleasantly."

"Thanks. Can I be of any use in helping you in your hunt for the villa?"

"Oh, thank you, no; much obliged to you, though—much obliged."

The party then broke up; and Cosmo, at least, left the room with very different feelings from those which he had brought into it, notwithstanding that his lordship bade him good-night with a stately frigidity, which was amply responded to in kind. The fact was, either that something in Cosmo's air or manner had piqued the old gentleman, who was pleased with little short of a slavish deference, or perhaps he had been seized with one of those unaccountable prejudices by which we are sometimes so unreasonably set against strangers, or—well, he did not love Dr. Fell, though the reason why may have been as unexplainable as that in the proverb.

Cosmo's wrath against his friend had evaporated. "I dare say you were bored, Tom," he said, as they were separating for the night. "The noble lord was not too lively, I can imagine."

"Oh yes, I was bored, of course; but I rather like the old fellow; and I improved the shining hour, I think. I always cotton to swells, you know, because swells generally have shooting; and, by-the-bye, I made quite a little pro-

gramme for us both, while he was bragging about his confounded daubs. It was this: You to close with the Finmore shooting, and I to shoot with you there from the 12th to—say the 28th—as long as dogs are practicable, in fact; and then go on to Dunerlacht after the black game begins, and the driving. What say you?"

"Very jolly for you."

"How could you are! Now, a good fellow would have added 'rapture for myself and luck for Lord Germistounne.' Your manners are far from nice, Cosmo. By-the-bye, how do you like the Madonna?"

"I think Miss Douglas is extremely agreeable."

"Indeed! And 'the contact?' was it not too intolerable?"

"What contact?"

"Oh, you've forgotten our little dialogue in the boat! Well, well, never mind. By-the-bye, I withdraw from my position as swain and suitor. Her hands are too large."

"I didn't observe it."

"I did, though; I shouldn't know what to do with them. I'm going to stick to her parent instead. I know there ought to be a tremendous show of birds this year at Dunerlacht. They had a jubilee last year, and Snowie tells me there's not a scrap of disease in the district. Good-night, Cosmo. I suppose we may consider Finmore a fixture?"

"I don't know."

"Come now, captain, make it a fixture, and I'll stay with you to the 31st. I can't say fairer than that."

"It certainly is most liberal."

"And I'll even return for a week or two at the finish, if I can manage it."

"Provided no better billet offers itself."

"Well, hang it! I'm only a mortal, after all. Come, now, 'parole Dunerlacht,' as you blood-thirsty mercenaries say in the army; bring the parable home and add, 'countersign Finmore—pass Thomas Wyedale, and all's well.' Come now, ont with it."

"I never talked shop, even when I was in the service."

"An excellent rule; but the necessary exception would sound well in this echoing corridor. Now, then, in a deep, soul-stirring barytone, 'countersign Fin—'"

"Parole 'Blankets,' countersign 'Bed,'" said Cosmo, entering his room and shutting the door.

"Diplomacy retires before the brutalities of War," shouted Tom, going on his way.

"Will Diplomacy have a liquor before he turns in?" said Mr. Cass, the American hero of the *table-d'hôte*, looking out of his door.

"Sir," said Tom, "between 'diplomacy' and 'dipsomania,' the English language marks a distinction which is probably not preserved in the American dialect. Nevertheless, what is the creature?"

"Bourbon whiskey. Drinks short. Cleans the white of the eye."

"That's conclusive. I'm on. We can only die once," said Tom.

Echoes of his laughter, long and loud, came, for an hour and more, from Mr. Cass's room, and reached Cosmo, who, turning angrily on his pillow, muttered, "Confound the fellow! he's got hold of some one else now. I believe he'd rather

er sit up all night with a Trappist than go to bed at a reasonable hour." And, indeed, Tom would have found talk and laughter enough to supply the deficiencies of twenty Trappists for a thousand and one nights, if necessary.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE are three influences which generally carry their point in this sinful world—violence, obstinacy, and money. Men, as a rule, hate a row, and either knuckle under to violence or get quietly out of its way. Obstinacy wears out the resistance of indifference and laziness, which, in nineteen cases out of twenty, are its only opponents; and as for money, the consciences of all intelligent readers tell them what it can do, so that the author need not commit himself to a misanthropical axiom.

Lord Germistounne, enjoying the advantage of all these forces in combination, generally contrived, as he said, to get his own way; and, in this wrathful freak about the villa, he was successful. The hotel authorities, warned by the courier of his master's indignant resolve, tendered every sort of salve, in the way of excuse and apology, which Italian amiability, sharpened by self-interest, could devise; but in vain. Violence gave way, indeed; but obstinacy stepped into the breach.

"I never," said Lord Germistounne to the excellent and most courteous manager—"I never go back from my word. All you say may be true, and indeed your tone is proper—very proper; but I have made up my mind. You may go."

Then the courier was despatched post-haste to "find a villa." Under ordinary circumstances, to find a villa ready, then and there, and available for so short a term, would have been out of the question, and not to be dreamed of. But Lord Germistounne being violent, obstinate, and rich, the necessary dwelling was at once procured. The favorite maid of an Italian *marchesa* who was occupying the Villa Bianca for the season, had been accidentally drowned in the lake two nights before, and her mistress had received such a shock from the occurrence that she was anxious to leave the place at once. And thus, by paying her a double rent, and taking over the establishment as it stood, on condition of *instant* possession, the noble lord was able, literally, to carry his point. His new landlady went to the hotel for the night; and he, sending his courier in the forenoon to order dinner, took his daughter over in the evening, in time to avoid the *origo mali*—the *table-d'hôte*.

"It is too large," he said, "and the rent is distinctly monstrous; but it will be a lesson to them. The money is well spent."

And perhaps it was. "What!" you cry, "in such sinful extravagance? in such a shameful indulgence of temper?" Yes; but the money went to the marchioness, who may have been an angel of charity, who may have fed the hungry and clothed the naked with the *lire* of the angry man, and who at least took from bloated England a crumb or two for starveling Italy. There is an unction, drawn from philanthropy and political economy, which the angry pauper may lay to his soul when he is glaring with fiery eyes at

the profligate extravagance of the rich—and it is this, that, in the vast majority of cases, the rich man, by his self-indulgent frailties, even though he fool it to the top of his bent, does infinitely more good than harm to the world at large. He may damage himself, to be sure; but what of that? He is in an infinitesimal minority. The greatest good of the greatest number. If that is our motto, we may look on with equanimity and resignation when another, and yet another, dukeling is cut down, withered by the epidemic of imbecile profusion, so fatal of late years to our young aristocracy.

If the indulgence of bad temper be criminal, the beauty of the Villa Bianca involved a certain miscarriage of poetical justice. A little below Cadenabbia, the lowest spur of a thickly wooded hill, projects a promontory into the lake; and on the centre of this the villa stood, somewhat higher than all its neighbors, and with a clear prospect up, down, and across the water. A pleasant confusion of garden and grove and shrubbery clothed the little peninsula with luxuriant wealth of flowers and foliage, and made the air about the house rich with the perfumes of rose and violet, of citron, jessamine, magnolia, and myrtle. Much taste and ingenuity had been displayed in laying out, adorning, and giving variety to this little territory. A labyrinthine path traversed it in all directions, and wound up with a gentle ascent to the summit of the hill behind. There, there was a circular summer-house, open all round, and commanding views in every direction. Besides this, divers tributary paths led to a variety of well-chosen points of view, where the prospect might be enjoyed in shady solitudes.

Esmè was enchanted with her new abode; and the favor with which her father first regarded it, as a kind of moral beacon for refractory hotel-keepers, was soon confirmed by its own charms. They began at once to live in the open air; and, small though their domain was, it contained so much variety in itself, and enjoyed so unlimited a command of the scenery round about, that they seldom went beyond their own boundaries till evening, when, if the coolness of the air tempted them out on the lake, they were rowed about in a pretty boat, manned by rowers in a picturesque costume, which belonged to the establishment. Esmè, who had a keen eye for all kinds of beauty, and who was very susceptible of impressions from external nature, was never tired of wandering from point to point of the pleasaunce and the hill. To her it was a fairy-land, through which she moved amidst constant transformations, finding in every mood a congenial resting-place, and even being able, as she said, to alter her mood at will by a change of scene that could be effected in a few seconds.

"If I wish to be 'sublime,'" she wrote to a friend, in describing the place, "I have only to climb to the top of our 'Muses Hill,' and gaze at the splendid mountains of the Engadine, far away, and watch the shifting lights on the eternal snow, and the weird effects of the whirling mists and vapors that hang about the boundary-line between the heat of Italy and the cold of the Alps and the glaciers; or if I desire to be gently poetical, I look down upon the sunny lake; or if a dark spirit possesses me, we have a grotto, all overshadowed by a gigantic ilex, where the world may be comfortably forgotten. If I wish

to sketch, there is a subject everywhere ready to my hand, and I have only to sit down and begin. In our Helicon we have natural music always, for a most harmonious little spring bubbles out near the top, and goes singing down among the silent trees, and through the gardens, and into the lake. As for poetry, we have it here at first hand. We see it and breathe it: there is no need of books."

Her father, without taking such a transcendental view of the place, was thoroughly contented with it. Nothing jarred on his irritable nerves. He worked away in the open air with his pencil and brush, read his papers *al fresco*, and composed weighty contributions to the literature of a "ganging plea," which still seems to constitute, in some Scottish families, a necessary condition of landed state and dignity.

Two days after his establishment in the villa, he paid a formal visit to the two friends at their hotel. They had met on the lake, and had a few minutes' conversation, on each of the previous evenings; and on this, as on all other occasions, his manner was especially cordial to Tom Wyedale, whose jovial humor had taken his fancy, none the less that its joviality was tempered with a careful deference to his opinions and prejudices. His manner to Cosmo, on the other hand, was markedly cool, stiff, and distant. He seemed to have a difficulty in realizing the fact that Cosmo existed and was present. He had certainly taken a violent dislike to the young man; to all which Cosmo, not slow to observe and swift to resent it, responded with an equal hauteur and reserve. Nevertheless, he accompanied Tom on the return visit the following day. They found Lord Germistounne sitting in the open air. He had just finished his correspondence for the day, and his letters lay on the table before him, sealed and ready for despatch. Esmè was with him, but just about to start with her drawing materials for the top of the hill; and on the friends begging that their visit might not detain her, she suggested that the whole party might transfer themselves to the summit, where she could promise a magnificent view; "and," she added, "I shall send you all away when I am going to begin my work."

Lord Germistounne and Tom having mutually button-holed each other, Esmè again fell to the lot of Cosmo, and she led the way with him.

"We are very proud of our realms," she said, "and I am going to take you all through them before we begin the ascent. Prepare yourself to be surprised and delighted."

Their pride was thoroughly justifiable. Cosmo was much struck by the ingenuity with which the labyrinthine path had been contrived; for, turning and winding, backward and forward, here, there, and everywhere, it led them past an astonishing variety of features, and gave the wanderer the impression that he was traversing a most spacious and variegated domain, though the whole was probably included within two hundred square yards. Here they came upon a grotto; there upon a fountain. Now they plunged into a bosky dell, all gloom and tangle; or passed under bright arcades, where the sunbeams glanced through leaves of the vine and the passion-flower. Now they emerged on the emerald sward of a miniature glade, or were met by gorgeous flashes of color from exquisite parterres.

Everywhere marble fauns and nymphs peered forth from bowery ambushes of bay and acacia, taking a semblance of life and movement from the quivering streamlet that washed their feet, and from the boughs and leaves that cast down upon them the shimmer of green-gold shadows. At the upper end, a pretty group of Nereids received a tiny cascade in a glittering shell, and let it escape, a meandering rivulet, to water the whole pleasure. At the other extremity, the daughters of Danais caught it again in a bottomless *amphora*, and gave it to the lake in its original form. All around, the descent to the water was steep and craggy; but flowers nestled among the rocks, creepers festooned the ledges, willows drooped their tremulous sprays over them. Whatever was harsh or rugged wore a brave mantle of bloom and greenery, and none but fair images fell upon the dreamy lake. At last it was all explored, and they began the ascent.

"Well," said Cosmo, "you are indeed to be congratulated. The contriver of all this must have been a genius. Of his one talent he has made at least ten, and he has done it all with such perfect taste. We have seen much in the small space, but there is no jumble or crowding. One little *morceau* of scenery seems to lead naturally to the next."

"It must have been a delightful amusement laying it out," said Esme.

"Yes; I think there can be nothing more fascinating than landscape-gardening."

"Oh, that must be delightful! like painting, with trees, and lakes, and rivers, and meadows for one's materials."

"And then the contriver of these grounds had, besides, all the difficulties and charms of the art, the triumph of concocting a sort of Chinese puzzle; a subtle delight for a mathematical mind, I suppose."

"You will see that he had quite as true an eye for grand scenery: all the points of view on the hill are perfectly chosen."

"There he excels his Italian ancestors. I was thinking, down in the garden, that it might all have existed in the old Roman days. Horace would have delighted in just such a place. One can imagine him reclining on that beautiful bit of turf beside the cascade, passing the flask of Chian wine to a circle of companions, pouring a libation to Bacchus, and making the company laugh with quaint conceits about the Nereids and all the mythological statuary."

"But then he would have changed his mood up here. Look at that glimpse, through the trees, of the high peak—the Bernina, I think it is."

"Magnificent! but Horace would simply have wrapped his toga round him, shivered, and proposed an immediate return to the 'Chian.' He would certainly have changed his mood, but it would not have been for one of fine frenzy."

"And yet he was the most popular poet of his time, was he not?"

"Certainly—the most popular; but if he had gone into ecstasies over sublime scenery, he would not have been so; men would not have understood him. A poet sings with the voice of his age, or he does not sing to it at all."

"Well, but they were immensely cultivated and civilized in those days."

"Yes, they were, of course; but their culture did not develop the love of natural scenery to any great extent. They liked pretty scenery, certainly; but they looked upon the Alps with horror, and the magnificence of a stormy sea was only a thing to be shuddered at. After all, this real love of scenery is quite modern."

"Then, has all this beautiful world been wasted for thousands of years upon eyes that might as well have been blind?"

"Wasted" is a strong word. Its beauty and grandeur may have produced all sorts of other valuable effects upon men's minds before it woke up what may almost be called a new passion."

"How *did* it come at last?"

"Ah, I am afraid that is getting rather beyond my depth. But I suppose, for one thing, it would begin to grow steadily as people began to travel."

"One does often notice that people who remain always in one place, even though it be beautiful, take its beauties as a matter of course, and don't seem to observe them or to be aware of them."

"But, as they begin to move from place to place, they naturally begin to compare one scene with another. The habit of comparison increases the habit of observation, and produces the idea of excellence. Art takes hold of this idea, develops it, paints it, teaches men to think of it, helps them to compose from their own experiences an ideal standard. By degrees, poetry recognizes the fitness of surrounding romantic action with picturesque scenery, and suggests the sympathy of external nature with men's emotions. This is almost altogether modern. The ancients have, indeed, beautiful flashes of it, but they are few and far between. One of the most perfect gems of modern poetry is Tennyson's 'Ænone.' You know it, of course. The same story is beautifully told by an old Latin poet. But compare the ancient with the modern, and it appears cold, sunless, and dead. The ancient relies upon the human *pathos* almost exclusively; the modern poet draws within the circle of his drama, as a most sympathetic audience, and almost as active participants, everything in external nature that made the Italian glen beautiful and impressive. The deep, solemn pine-wood—the light of the 'solitary' morning touching the far-away snow-peaks—the bewildered cloud seeking its lost way among the tree-tops—the silence, the shadows, the distant murmur of the cascade—all in perfect harmony with the sorrow that is wringing Ænone's heart. And then the burst of life and joy when Aphrodite appears—the upspringing of the violet and the crocus, the lotus, the lily, the amaranthus, the asphodel, to do her honor:

"And a wind arose,

And overhead, the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch, and berry, and flower, thro' and thro'."

Even history at last begins to chronicle events with an eye to the scenery in which they are enacted, and delights to point to harmonies and discords between the former and the latter. Look at Macanlay, Froinde, and Kinglake, and then turn to Hume and Smollett. And—"But here Cosmo broke off with a laugh, and said, "A thousand apologies, Miss Douglas, for pros-

ing and lecturing to you, and for what is perhaps, after all, mere solemn nonsense. What I mean to say is, simply, that when this educational system has once been set in motion by the arts, or what not, every sort of other influence co-operates, and helps to clear our perceptions of that to which the old world was nearly blind."

"You spoke," said Esmé, after a pause, "of 'a poet singing with the voice of his age;' and I remember now that there is nothing worth speaking of, in the way of landscape, among the early painters. It had never occurred to me before that the love of scenery was a modern invention, and I don't think I had thought about the blank in early art. Now I understand the reason."

"Ah, an analogy! Well, I suppose the artist ought to give expression, in every age, to that with which the more ideal side of human nature is mainly occupied in his time. It was the aspiration of the ancient Greeks to reach, by moral and physical discipline, an ideal standard of beauty in the human form. How splendidly this is expressed in their sculpture! In the Dark Ages, art, in any true sense, all but slumbered, because in the Dark Ages its occupation was all but gone. Then, at the revival of art, we find religion altogether the predominant subject. The painters, to be sure, were generally, if not monks, under monkish influence; but, in fact, religion was in these days almost the only outlet which men had from their lower nature. As the outlets were multiplied, the field of art was extended. You couldn't have a better proof of this than by going direct from the Florentine galleries to the annual exhibition of the 'Salon' in Paris, or of Burlington House in London. Outlets there, with a vengeance. No one artist nowadays could represent his age as one of the great old masters represented his; he would require to have a thousand minds. Forgive all these truisms."

"But they are not truisms to me. Though I have seen many of the best pictures in the world, I am afraid I have not thought about them—beyond, of course, immensely admiring what appeared to me to be beautiful."

"And I am sure you could not meet with any one less competent than I am to hold forth on the philosophy of art. I know nothing, except that I know nothing."

"Oh, but you have both seen and thought; and that at least gives you knowledge enough for yourself—enough to make you enjoy art thoroughly."

"But not enough to entitle me to lecture you as I have been doing. Now, tell me which of all the pictures you have seen is your favorite?"

"What a formidable question! If I knew anything about painting, I might be able to say which, in my opinion—*my* opinion! how grand that sounds!—is the most admirable as a painting. But I know nothing of technicalities. I only know the pictures that please me, and impress me, and touch me the most; and there are so many that seem to do all these things the *most*. No, I could never say which was my greatest favorite; I have so many. Every mood has its greatest favorite; and each mood is *me*, I suppose, for the time being. So I can have no one *constant*, greatest favorite. That sounds dreadfully fickle, does it not?"

"Not at all. If we had no change of moods,

life would be monotonous indeed; and if in each mood you felt the same appreciation of the same picture, it might only show that you were not really touched by it at all. A connoisseur, of course, can have a constant favorite, because his judgment as to the mechanical part of the work will not vary; but when it comes to be a question of sentiment, everything is changed."

"There is one painter, by-the-bye," said Esmé, "though not one painting, whom I sometimes fancy I prefer, on the whole, to all the others. Of course, you will think me a barbarian; for he is, I suppose, what you would call a painter of the darker age: but I must be honest—I mean Perugino."

"Perugino?"

"Yes; you are horrified, are you? Well, I like him for one quality, and that is the beautiful, pure, innocent expression which he gives to all his figures. That, of course, would not make him a *great* painter, but it makes all his works lovable. I don't think he could paint a bad man. It ~~does~~ ^{is} one good to look at the faces he has painted. I don't think they are often to be seen in the real world, although they are real men and women. But there they are, always in his pictures, saints and angels, and holy men and women, such as they should be. There is a St. John in the 'Belle Arti' Museum at Florence which makes one think of man as he may have been before the Fall. One must delight in goodness and innocence in every mood, and so I am always delighted with Perugino."

"You prefer him to his immortal disciple—to Raphael?"

"Well—no; I won't answer that question. Of course, even *I* know how much the disciple excels the master in many things, and in none more than in the power of painting varieties of expression. Raphael can paint every human emotion. Perugino is always expressing the same, but it is one that delights me more than any other."

"Of course, then, you have the same feeling for Fra Angelico?"

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, I have; but not nearly to the same extent. I think his holy faces are the faces of holy people who have never had any temptation. Perugino's are quite as holy; and I think one has more sympathy with them, because they are the faces of people who have thought, and struggled, and suffered—who have come out from many trials and temptations saddened but purified and pure. Do you not like them? I hope you do."

"Indeed I do. I have always been a great admirer both of Perugino and Fra Angelico, and for *your* reason; but the distinction which you draw between them never occurred to me. It is excellent. I will remember it when I am among pictures again; and really, it is natural; for Angelico lived his holy life in the convent, and Perugino lived *his* life in the world."

"Yes, Angelico's saints are certainly convent-bred saints. Perugino's have had sad experiences in the outer world."

"I see you *have* thought about pictures, notwithstanding your humble disclaimer."

"No, I don't know how to think; do you believe that any woman does?"

"If I had ever doubted it, you would have satisfied me that my doubt was groundless."

"Oh, Mr. Glencairn, you must not laugh at me! I can only think, and then only in a very dim way, when I am talking. One's silent thoughts are so vague and shifting."

"The complaint is fully as much male as female; you may be sure. I suspect that the thoughts of most men are seldom quite completed till they are being expressed in some shape or other. But the remedy is simple, is it not?"

"What is it? Oh, I see!—to talk."

"Is that not simple? Or do you repudiate all the brutal proverbs about the fair sex on that score?"

"Of course I repudiate them, as in duty bound. But I am not really qualified to be a champion of my sex. I know so little of it: papa and I have been such wanderers since I was grown up, and we have so few neighbors in Scotland. Then papa's health has prevented us, almost entirely, from having visitors at home, so that my acquaintances are very limited indeed. I have a great many dear friends by hereditary right; but they are really strangers to me, and show more or less. Have you a great many friends?"

"A great many acquaintances, certainly; but the friends are, like yours perhaps, rather shadowy. But you have been in London some seasons, have you not?"

"Only one—the year I was presented; and that was such a whirl! People were very kind to me; but one does not get to know people in that kind of life; do you think so?"

"Men's lives are so different, but there is certainly little time for any one thing."

"No, there is no time to make friends. I possess one real female friend in the world—the funniest, quaintest, cleverest, kindest, best creature—my old governess, my beloved Fräulein. I don't think she is in the least like any one else; and if I were to form my ideas of women from her—the *only* one I know really—and act on my ideas, I suspect I should pass my life in a comedy of errors. A whole world full of Fräuleins! It would be a very nice world, to be sure, and a very good one, but too funny."

"Did you enjoy your season?"

"Some of it, very much; but there was too much of the same thing every day."

"I should have thought you would have found variety enough in London."

"Oh, one certainly did a great many different things every day; but every day was very like yesterday, and I was always tired. Papa thought I was not enjoying myself if I was not *always* doing something, and my chaperon was full of energy, and I could get no holidays. I wonder, now, what you would say—is quiet monotony or bustling monotony the more disagreeable?"

Cosmo laughed, and said, "Miss Douglas, I am getting quite afraid of you—you are so philosophical."

"Oh, please don't think me 'strong-minded.' It is only a little question I was constantly asking myself during that season. And oh! I must tell you, one night it got me into a dreadful scrape. I was dancing with a very pleasant partner—exactly like every other partner I had danced with every night for a month—and he was making himself very agreeable, exactly as they all had done, with the same ideas, and almost the same words, as they all had used; and I was tired,

and I became a little absent, as one does when one is tired, and this unlucky problem came into my head. Well, I mixed it up with what my partner was saying, and when he asked me, 'Which will you say?'—meaning which of two dances he knew I was disengaged for—I answered, 'I think, for the less of two evils, I would like to choose quiet monotony.' Then he was really very angry, and said, 'The quadrille, I suppose you mean; and the more I tried to explain, the less he seemed to understand, and became silent and sulky; and he didn't come for the dance. Was it not dreadful?'

"The loss of the dance was so serious?" laughed Cosmo.

"No, of course not; but his feelings were so much hurt—and he was really kind, and trying to amuse me. That was serious."

"Oh, Miss Douglas, I could tell now that you had not been many seasons in London."

"From my want of manners?" asked Esmè, simply.

"No, no; from thinking so much of the gentleman's feeling."

"Do you think a few seasons in London would make me careless about people's feelings? I don't think I should care to go to London again, if that were to be the result?"

The words were simple enough, and spoken without any *arrière-pensée*; but sometimes the simplest words, illustrated by a tone or a glance, offer a magical revelation of character to a sympathetic nature, and ever thereafter the voice that spoke them has a different sound. Even so was it now. "The Madonna!" said Cosmo to himself; and then aloud, after a long pause, "No, Miss Douglas, I am perfectly certain that no number of London seasons would produce that effect upon you."

Esmè changed color a little, and looked at him inquiringly; but his eyes were cast down, and she said nothing; and though she wondered how he could answer for her with so much confidence, she never for a moment suspected that he was using words of idle compliment. Here was an instance of the sudden, and, so to speak, unconscious but mutual insight of nature into nature, upon which one might expand psychologically; but fear not, watchful reader!

While the dialogue just recorded was in progress, the speakers had pursued the path in all its windings, stopping mechanically here and there, where a terrace and an artificial opening in the woods invited the passer-by to pause and admire. They had left all these, however, without comment, engrossed in other topics; and, as the last words were spoken, they reached the summit.

It would be difficult to conceive a more varied or beautiful prospect than that which here met them; and they enjoyed it, for a time, in silence. A scene of immense variety indeed, full of contrasts, with every feature of marked individuality, each full of individual suggestiveness, but associated by a series of delicately gradated tones of light and color which bound the complex whole together in a sort of ethereal federation. Thus the distant Alp was brought into communion with the vine-clad slopes, the bowery gardens and waving woods, and the grand expanse of the blue lake, with its images and shadows and flying gleams from snowy sails and flutter-

ing pennons. It was not a scene the beauties of which could be catalogued glibly off, as Milton's "Allegro" catalogues the items of his panorama. The delight of it would have exhaled in minute examination. The mind would have become wearied and paralyzed under so many and such various calls on its exertion. The *coup d'œil* was sufficient. It was one which words could never do justice to. This was one of the occasions when "silence is golden." Esmè, without speaking, merely turned on her companion a look of confidence in his appreciation, and then both were silent for some time. At last Cosmo said,

"Have you seen it by moonlight?"

"Yes," replied Esmè, "but it is a complete transfiguration. Nothing could be so changed by the absence of the sun. The color is the life of it. It is only a spectre by moonlight—beautiful, but with all its glory gone. It almost saddens one."

"I should like to see it."

"Oh, pray come and see it! I should like to hear what you think of it."

"But the moon becomes late of showing herself—too late to allow me to invade the villa."

"But, if you wish, we can have the gate left open for you, and you know your way up here now."

"Thanks," said Cosmo; "it is very good of you;" but perhaps he felt that he would rather contemplate the beautiful spectre in some other company than his own or Tom Wyedale's. This must have been his thought, otherwise his next sentence would have had no reasonable connection with the last; for, "At any rate," he said, after a pause, "I consider myself very fortunate to have made acquaintance with this splendid view by daylight and in your company."

"I consider that very flattering, Mr. Glencairn; because, in nine cases out of ten, one would rather be alone in looking at fine scenery. In nine cases out of ten, people either talk too much, or they say something jarring, or they are cold and indifferent."

"That is true; but it does not make what I say *flattering*. In all respects, this is one of the *tenth* cases."

Esmè looked at him quickly. Even in her short experience, she had had, no doubt, many gallant speeches made to her; but the judicial gravity of this method of making her pleased with herself was new, forcible, and gratifying. She laughed gayly, however, and said,

"Well, Mr. Glencairn, I feel as if I had talked a great deal too much; but you must blame yourself—you know it was your own prescription."

"To follow your metaphor, yours was one of the cases where the physician is called in, and finds the patient to be merely a *malade imaginaire*, but is forced to prescribe something to humor him."

"Oh, now you really are flattering me!" cried Esmè. "But, not to let you monopolize all the fine speeches, let me say that invalids sometimes find the doctor's visits more beneficial from his conversation than his prescriptions. But that, by-the-by, is not paying you in kind; for what I say is true—for once, you have really made me think."

"Who speaks of *malades imaginaires*?" here

broke in the voice of Lord Germistoun, who, having once been thus described by a brusque London doctor, was jealous of the phrase.

"It was only in a parable that such a person was mentioned," said Esmè.

"Ah! in a parable? The only proper place for him. No such person really exists. There's any quantity of imaginary health in the world, but no one needs to imagine himself sick. Every one is sick, more or less." Then, turning to Tom, he went on,

"As I was saying, these Lowland farmers are the most confounded fellows in Europe. I'll tell you what they are; they're Communists, that's what they are. The last time I was at Fernichall—my place in the Lowlands—two of these pirates came to me 'to remonstrate,' as they said, about the state of the game.

"I presume you mean rabbits?" I said.

"Rabbits, hares, and winged game too, particularly wood-pigeons," they answered.

"Well," I said, "why don't you add crows, magpies, and sparrows, and slugs, and snails, and everything that eats anything on a farm? But what do you want?"

"They said that their crops were being eaten, and they wanted the game to be killed down to a reasonable limit. I told them that the game was within a fair limit, and not more than enough for the sport which I had a right to expect for myself and my friends, on my estate, which, I begged to remind them, was my own.

"But our crops are being eaten," they said.

"And so they ought to be," I replied, "in a fair proportion."

"Game," I then explained to them, "is placed on a property by Divine Providence—just as wind blows on it, sun shines on it, rain and hail fall upon it, by the decree of Providence. The crops suffer a little from all these things, by the decree of Providence—and, by the same decree, the game eats the crops in a fair proportion. Great heavens!" I said, "are you going to fly in the face of Providence?"

"They declined to fall in with this view of the matter, and I then remarked,

"When you became farmers, you knew what you had to expect; when you signed your leases, you knew all these things; and what the devil do you mean by trying to squeeze me for more than your covenant gives you?"

"We want justice," they said.

"No," I replied, "you want injustice—injustice for me; and then I gave it them hot.

"I'll tell you what it is," I said; "if you think I'm going to be harried and bothered by a lot of malcontents, you're mistaken. I'll make you an offer; it is a good deal more than just—it is foolishly generous. I'll cancel your leases, if you like, and all the leases on the estate, and turn it all into a game-preserve. There; I believe there is a good market for game, and I dare say I should not lose much by the transaction. But I'm indifferent to that. One thing is certain, I am not going to be the servant of my own tenants, cost me what my freedom may."

"Then I bowed them out, and told them to send their decision to the factor."

"Admirable!" cried Tom; "that is the way to deal with them. What did they do?"

"Do? Stuck to their farms, of course. One of them made seventy thousand pounds out of

my land in thirty years; I know that for a certainty: and he was only paying me a rent of six hundred pounds. And what did this fellow do? started against my man as candidate for my boroughs—on the game-laws 'platform,' of course. Fortunately I was able to take advantage of a technical flaw in the lease, and send him to the right-about."

"Ha! ha! ha!—bravo! I dare say there was a considerable fuss about that."

"I believe there was; but I never read the Radical papers, so it didn't even reach me. In any case, the anger of pickpockets against a man for looking after his own watch and purse is not likely to affect him much. The Lowland tenant-farmer is the most confounded fellow in Europe. There is no one so greedy and selfish."

"I believe," said Cosmo, "that the great irritation of the farmers about game is owing not altogether, nor perhaps even so much, to over-preservation as to the fact that the game is very generally sold; and another thing they dislike is, that it isn't even shot by the gentlemen of the neighborhood. The farmers, of course, have some sort of neighborly feeling for them, which they can't possibly have for the strangers who are invited to the *battues* simply because they are crack shots, able to swell the grand total of the bag. All this looks to the farmer like a mere mercantile transaction. I confess I am not surprised at it. What they wouldn't grudge to the landlord for his own and his neighbor's amusement, they do grudge when it appears to be simply another rent to be taken off the land at the expense of the rents which they have to find."

"You defend them?" cried Lord Germistonne, with a rising crest.

"Not entirely, by any means; but I can quite understand their point of view, and to some extent sympathize with it."

Cosmo was resolved to be calm, firm, and judicial, though greatly irritated by the domineering tone of the noble lord, and smarting under previous impertinences.

"Then, pray, sir," said Lord Germistonne, "may I ask, has a man, or has he not, the right to do with his own as he pleases?"

"Unquestionably, so long as it is his own exclusively; but it seems to me he limits his rights of proprietorship when he admits another by contract, and for a consideration, to share in the proceeds of his property: by so much he lessens his right to do as he pleases with what is *then*, only *nominally*, his own property."

"This is rank communism!"

"Excuse me, my lord," said Cosmo, angry, but with a laugh, "I entirely decline to plead guilty to that. 'Communism' is a word that at present is very lightly used, and very loosely. But as to the game question, after all, the grievance is, as I say, very much a sentimental one, which the tact and good feeling of the landlords would easily allay."

"By giving up all their rights?"

"By no means; simply by exercising them with fairness and discretion."

"I see, sir, that you are one of the 'new lights.' When you have an estate of your own, you will find your theories change marvellously."

"I don't pretend to any elaborate theories; any acquaintance I have with the question is a practical one. As a game-tenant myself, I have

come a good deal into contact with agricultural tenants, and have never had the slightest difficulty with them."

"Ah, that is beside the question altogether. I decline to consider sophisms. I distinctly beg to be excused from argument with a sophist. The Lowland tenant-farmer is the most confounded fellow in Europe. If you want to find Belleville and Montmartre done into Scotch, go to Forfarshire, and Aberdeenshire, and the Lothians, and you will find them." Saying this, he glared at Cosmo, with a *sic volo, sic jubeo* air, as though he were one of the agriculturists in question, cast out of court and in outer darkness for the future.

"Poor Cosmo!" said Tom, as though his friend's logical annihilation were complete, "you'll never make much of politics. You had better stick to your moonlight, and music, and pictures, and leave politics to practical men like Lord Germistonne, or even my humble self."

"A nice business you'd make of them!—I mean you, of course, Tom," said Cosmo; "but this is *not* a political question. It is extremely mischievous and wrong to try to make it one."

"I think," said his lordship, loftily, "we have quite exhausted the subject."

"If it is not politics, it is quite as unpleasant," laughed Esmè; "and therefore I am glad it is exhausted. Papa, Mr. Glencairn has given me so many new ideas!"

"They appear to be his *forte*," growled her father.

"Oh, but not stupid, prosy ideas about game, and farmers, and rents; but about art, and pictures, and the spirit of the age—what you never *will* answer my questions about, or talk about."

"I don't want you to be a 'new light,' my dear. I had rather not see you lecturing on a platform. Pray confine yourself to your own subjects. What?"

"But, papa, what *are* my own subjects?"

"There, there! don't tease," snapped her father, with a pettish little stamp of his foot.

Esmè gave a comic look of terror, and, presently crossing over to Cosmo, said, "There is a view to the back you ought to see. Shall we go?" and they began to move.

"Where are you going?" cried Lord Germistonne, sharply.

"Only to the other side of the plateau, papa, to look at the inland view."

"I wish you to go down with me now, at once, Esmè. There is something I wish to have copied," and he turned in the direction of the villa. His lordship's temper was evidently broken, and his company manners all but evaporated; and so the descent was made in haste, and almost in silence. Even Tom Wyedale's rattling power of talk was not exercised. Tom felt by instinct that it was not his hour. Cool adieux on the part of his lordship, even to Tom; more than cool—stiff and grim—to Cosmo. A laughing whisper from Esmè to the latter, "Shall we have the gate left open? Will you visit 'the spectre' to-night?" A gay reply from Cosmo that it would "hardly be safe, in the present state of the game-laws and the penalties against night-poaching;" and so the visit ended.

"What were you saying to that puppy, Esmè?" snarled Lord Germistonne, when the friends had gone.

"What puppy, dear papa?" asked Esmé, with demure innocence.

"You know who I mean; that priggish fellow with the theatrical name—Glencairn."

"Oh, Mr. Glencairn! I could never have recognized him under all these wonderful epithets."

"You're a little imbecile. I hate giggling. You distinctly giggled with him just now. I abominate giggling. Get ink."

"You're ruining all my plans for the autumn, Cosmo," said Tom, as they strolled homeward.

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"Mean? I mean that you're getting that old man's back up mountains high; and he's just the sort of fellow to visit your sins upon your associate. You'll cut me out of my Dunerlacht shooting, to a moral certainty. Why do you beard him? Why do you run against his hobbies?"

"Do you suppose I am going to cry 'Amen' to every pompous old autocrat who chooses to talk nonsense to me? I wouldn't do it to get all the shooting in Scotland for myself; and I'm not likely to do it merely to let your 'programme,' as you call it, fulfil itself."

"It's deuced selfish of you, then. There is no place in Scotland where you can make so mixed a bag, or so big a one, as Dunerlacht—that I'm sure of. There's a lake, and a marsh, and the moor, and a good lump of forest, and A1 partridge-ground—all convenient to each other. It's unique—that's what it is, and I've set my heart upon it. And now I'm to lose it, all because of your conceited, stiff-necked temper! What *does* it matter what the Lowland tenant-farmer thinks, or does, or says, or suffers? Confound the Lowland tenant-farmer! For a day's good shooting I would agree to swear him anything, from an angel to an imp of darkness; and, for the same consideration, I'd include in the same category every agriculturist, from the rising of the sun unto the going-down of the same. Hang it all! what can it matter to you? But I've no patience with you."

"There's an effrontery about your selfishness, Tom, which is almost magnificent, from its expanse. However, you're not a humbug—not to me, that is to say—which is so far well. And now, for your comfort, I may tell you that I shall spare your prospects any further jeopardy by having nothing more to do with Lord Germistoun. His manner to me is nothing short of insolent. So be of good cheer. A little of your unadulterated blarney will soon set matters right for you and your unique mixed bag."

"What! you'll cut the connection altogether?"

"Yes, I will."

"And Miss Douglas?"

"Well, what of her? Of course I can't meet her if I don't meet her father."

"That's a pity too; you seem to pull well; but I suppose it can't be helped. After all, there's a good deal of common-sense, Cosmo, in what you say. There's an incompatibility between your temper and that old patriarch's that would lead to nothing pleasant for either of you. Your absence will certainly help my autumn scheme. On the whole, I have no objection. It won't be so pleasant, of course, going by one's self; but I can make a sacrifice for a friend at a time, I hope."

"Of a friend, at least, beyond any sort of question."

"That's right: have a good sneer. Don't mind me. It will do you a world of good, after bottling up so much dignity with his lordship. By-the-bye, you've decided, I suppose, to close with Finmore?"

"No; and I don't think, on reflection, that I'll go to Scotland this autumn. I think I may go to the Dolomites, perhaps, or try the fishing in Bohemia, or make the tour of the Crimea—one ought to do that—and perhaps work through the islands of the Ægean afterward, or—"

"Why not do the Andamans, or the Fijis, when you're about it? or, say, the Antarctic Circle? Well, you are— Then, one way or other, you're determined to ruin my autumn—that's about it. So there's no good my hanging on *here* to make up my book. I'll be off. I say, by-the-bye"—here Tom lowered his voice to a confidential tone—"do you remember what I was saying about my banker the other night?"

"No, I can't say I do, particularly; he is so often under discussion, you know."

"Why, I told you, didn't I, of his heathenish conduct about that over-draft? and you very kindly said—"

"Did I?"

"That is, you were just going to say, when that old ass began to shout for assistance—"

But here again Tom was interrupted. "Lady and gentleman anxious to see you, sir," said a waiter, for they had now reached the hotel.

"Who are they?" said Tom.

"Don't know name, sir."

"Where, then?"

"No. 26, sir. Just arrived from Milan. Maid and courier, sir."

"Do *they* want to see me too?"

"No, sir," grinned the waiter.

"Show me up, then." And off he went, all excitement, forgetful of his budget, and his autumn, and everything else.

"What a weather-cock the fellow is!" muttered Cosmo. "No doubt his finances are in an awful state, and some one will certainly have to suffer. Just as certainly, however, Tom won't be the sufferer."

CHAPTER V.

TOM WYEDALE was not again visible to his friend that evening. Apparently the anonymous party in No. 26 had proved amusing; and thus Cosmo was left to his own society. An occasional respite from Tom's eternal flow of mirth and badinage was not unwelcome to him, and on this afternoon it was a positive relief. Cosmo was in a thoughtful mood. He indulged it in a long saunter along the shores of the lake; and at night, when the moon rose, he went out upon his balcony overlooking the lake, and again took up the thread of his reverie.

At certain stages of life, people of a certain temperament and cast of thought seem to become suddenly conscious that their relations with the past are altogether altered—that what seemed, but yesterday, good and pleasant and fitting, must, or ought to; cease to be so any longer. Such minds do not appear (though the process, if unconscious, must be gradual) to arrive gradu-

ally at a conviction of change, but to reach, with a bound, each new stand-point, from which the necessities of the actual present and the things of the immediate past are instantaneously discovered to have no relation to each other, but to be separated by an impassable gulf. To such, even at the outer confines of childhood, its toys become in an instant despicable. At the next stage, the delights and ambitions of adolescence are discovered, by a *coup d'œil*, to be paltry and insufficient. Later on, the goodness of pleasure, scanned in the musings of a single night, seems in a night to pale and wither—exposed by a sudden vivid light, in which life's realities flash upon the vision, or in which duty unmasks itself and emerges from the luminous mists of illusion. And so on, doubtless, to the end; for these are only, in a more defined and emphatic form, that series of deaths and resurrections which, in ourselves, we all undergo, and which connects itself with the ultimate death which we all know we must die—with the ultimate resurrection, in which we hope to begin a new and higher life. The experiences of each past stage are the poet's "stepping-stones of their dead selves," by which men may rise to nobler things; and those to whom each stage is thus sharply revealed ought to have the firmest foothold for the ascent.

Cosmo Glencairn was of this temperament. In his case, one of these stages had been marked by his adoption of the army as a profession, and another by his retirement from it. To the first step he was led, not merely by the natural attraction which the "career of arms" has for spirited youth, but, after the close of a studious and earnest career at the university, by a sudden reactionary feeling in favor of an active as against a studious and contemplative life. "I have learned my part for the drama of life, as much as books can teach it to me; and now I must play it. Life cannot be meant to be passed in literary *otium* or philosophical speculation. A true man's true mission is active exertion in the noblest sphere he can find. I have had enough of books. Let me act; let me be a hero!" Thus mused the young enthusiast; and his ignorance of that life in which, as he conceived, he had learned to play his part, suddenly buried his aspirations in the bathos of a cavalry regiment. Noble lives are doubtless led, and noble aspirations fulfilled, in that splendid branch of a glorious service; but the aspirants are usually more patient, and have more definite and limited and less transcendental aims, than those professed by Cosmo Glencairn, who forgot that in actual warfare alone does the army offer a really exalted and heroic sphere for active exertion. But to lead an active and heroic life!—it was for this that he turned his back upon the Muses; and, after the pleasant novelty of the dramatic side of military life had worn off, he found that he was embracing a shadow where he had hoped to find a substance.

There was nothing heroic in the routine of "stables" and parades—nothing lofty in mounting guard over things that required no protection; and he was too much (or too little) of a philosopher, to like, or even venerate, the minutiae of regimental organization, and their liturgical observance, in consideration of that far-away end—efficiency before the enemy—which they are designed to subserve. The patience which

does so consciously is eminently laudable, and may indeed be altogether heroic; but Cosmo's heroism was of a different stamp. Yet youth, however earnest and philosophical, is youth, after all—Mr. Stuart Mill's venerable infancy notwithstanding; and the weariness and disappointment which his mistaken choice of a profession entailed were for a time neutralized, or at least quieted, by those first experiences of social pleasure which are so delightful when life opens in a burst of sunshine. Many of the best gifts of Fortune—youth, health, wealth, personal charms, gay surroundings, troops of pleasant friends, promotion coming quickly, as it often comes to those who care nothing for it—all these were Cosmo's. It was a glittering life; and it was only at the end of five years that the conviction flashed upon him that the brightness was not the effulgence of sterling gold. But then it came suddenly, embodied in the following reflections: "It is all pleasure—nothing else. What we call 'duty' is simply mechanical, calling for nothing but the slightest physical exertion. I am doing nothing; I am thinking nothing; I am losing ground intellectually. The world is none the better for me. I am altogether deteriorating in the sphere which I have chosen; I must leave it at once. Nothing else seems open to me—no other field for high or even useful effort. After all, I am ignorant and uncultivated, and fit for nothing. I thought myself educated when I left college, but I find that I had only learned the alphabet, and I have been unlearning it ever since. Self-culture—that must be my first business; when that is complete, the hidden uses of my existence may be revealed."

The immediate consequence of all this was, a few weeks later, the "Gazette" announcement, "—Dragon Guards.—Captain Cosmo Glencairn retires from the service by the sale of his commission;" and the departure of the ex-dragon shortly after, with a trunk full of promiscuous literature, science, art, and philosophy, to qualify for the discovery of the hidden uses of his existence, in a tour through Europe. Cosmo did not plunge hap-hazard into his travels, shaping and changing his course by passing caprice. He set about his educational pilgrimage in a most systematic way; and his appearance at any special place generally marked a stage of progress in some particular study. History, art, systems of philosophy, systems of religion, ethnology—such and such like—were the companions, the directors, the objects of his travel; and, since the strongholds of art and history lie for the most part in pleasant and romantic lands, his poetic fancy and his love for the beautiful were forever receiving fresh delights and new instruction. His tour was by no means a continuous one; it was regularly broken every year by a return home for several months, which were spent in visiting his friends, and in that Highland sport which he loved almost as well as did the feverish intriguer—his friend Tom Wyedale.

Thus had passed more than three years; and the years of Cosmo's life were eight-and-twenty—a great age, as it appeared to him—a great many years to have been passed in receiving seed, without the issue of a single grain of harvest crop. And on this night, looking down from his balcony upon the still and moonlit waters, this conviction—the spirit, perhaps, of another stage—fell upon

him. Deep was his depression, deep his self-dissatisfaction, as he reviewed his own career and the process of his own self-culture. He came to the conclusion that, after all his pains, he was still but at the threshold of knowledge, and as far removed as ever from achievement of any sort. "Born to be a cipher, a dreamer, at best a *dilettante*." Such was his despairing verdict on himself, as it well may be that of others who, however cultivated, neither test nor utilize their acquirements by carrying them into the field of active competition with other men. And what then? The future seemed to be a blank. Was this another recoil from the contemplation to the active life, destined to mark the commencement of a new phase in his history? He certainly believed it to be so. Of one thing he was convinced—that from his wandering life all the good, if any, that could be derived from it had been already extracted, and that it ought to cease. But in the future there was a blank; and even for the time, in his own consciousness, all onward impulses to effort and achievement seemed to be paralyzed. The darkness of soul which falls at times so overwhelmingly upon the children of genius fell down upon him—that darkness which permits the sufferer to see nothing save his own impotence, the incompleteness of the highest human effort, the shortness of life and the narrow limits of human power in comparison with the magnitude of human aspiration—these, and, written everywhere and standing out in letters of fire on the walls of this mental prison-house, a mournful inscription declaring that "all is vanity."

The steps which led up to the conclusion that his wandering life must cease had no doubt been many, though passed over all but unconsciously; but some proximate cause of especial energy there must have been to develop and unmask the conviction, and to bring about this state of despondency, from the midst of which it sprang into evidence. The task is not for us to grope through psychological labyrinths, and discover, for the concurrence of intellectual convictions and strange phases of moral consciousness, the explanation of a common cause. Suffice it to say that something in the events of the day had produced the feeling of despondency; and the sentiment of self-dissatisfaction which usually accompanies it had naturally issued in the conviction that a change of life was necessary. But what was that something which set the whole process in motion? Cosmo himself could not have told you. It certainly could not have been the disturbance of his equanimity by Lord Germistonne's unpleasant tone and bearing toward him. Certainly not. He could never have allowed himself to be more than irritated by any one whom he held in contempt. Was it in reality the discovery of a new want—the unconscious perception of a void in his life, in his being, revealed by the existence of that which might satisfy the one by filling the other? Well, but what was the want? and what could supply it? All was misty, dark, and perplexing, and Cosmo's cogitations brought no solution.

It was late when they came to a close, and he turned from the balcony. But, as he turned, the moon, which for a time had been obscured, dropped, far away out upon the lake, a solitary circle of silver light. Complete and solitary, it gleamed for a moment with a weird effulgence—isolated

in the darkness of surrounding waters—gleamed thus for a moment, then slowly widened, and at last gradually broke into a thousand tremulous shafts, from the midst of which one broad smooth avenue of mellow fire went solemnly to landward. It crept up through the gardens of the Villa Bianca, and bathed its glittering walls; it stole over the exuberant foliage of the woods behind, and absorbed into its breadth of light the snowy glints that flashed from plumes of feathery blossom, till, from the lake to the hill-top, it lay like the path of some blessed angel who paused a moment on his heavenward way and rested upon Esmè's home. Oh, mother Nature! beauteous and benign—mother that never yet deceived the heart that loved thee well—was this the mute response of thy tender oracle to the bewilderment of a spirit that dimly felt, but could not utter, its enigma?

CHAPTER VI.

TOM WYEDALE was by no means a domestic character. So much may have already been surmised. His intercourse with his relations was intermittent and spasmodic, depending very often upon the state of his exchequer. Barometric pressure in that quarter was usually accompanied by a rise in the thermometer of his family affections, and *vice versa*; and in the latter condition there generally intervened between him and his people a certain haze which concealed from either party the whereabouts and movements of the other. Tom was the kind of fellow whom one meets without surprise in any part of the habitable globe; lounging in the "Street of Hermes," or loafing in "Fifth Avenue;" swarming up the "Cordilleras;" in "the Corso," in "Rotten Row," in the "Maidan;" punting at San Francisco or Monte Carlo; in the ring at Epsom, at Longchamps, or Deyrah Doon—wherever men are conspicuous by their presence or their absence; and very especially where money is to be lightly made and lightly lost. His own appreciation of time and space being blunted by his erratic habits, he was prepared, in his turn, to meet any one anywhere without astonishment. Thus, when he walked into No. 26 and found his brother-in-law and his sister, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Ravenhall, his only emotion was one of slight regret that his summons had not come from a more interesting quarter.

"Oh, it's you, Lucy, is it?" he said, as he entered; "I couldn't think who it could be. How are you, Frank? Well, what brings you Londoners here at this time of year, when the gay and voluptuous throng the haunts of folly? And how does the senator escape from the toils of lawgiving? How does the wisdom of the nation thrive without its mainspring?"

"Oh, Frank has been out of sorts—overworked; too many committees, and then the night-work. We have come away for a month's complete rest."

"As Frank's night-work usually consists of eating big, good dinners, and playing small, bad whist, I think we can promise him perfect repose down here. But is this your destination?"

"Well, we haven't quite decided on anything. As we were passing through Milan, we met the

Phillippes, and heard a charming account of the weather here, and also that you were here; so we thought we might as well run down and try it: and here we are. What a time it is since we have seen you! Where have you been? What have you been doing with yourself? What can you be doing in this quiet place? Are you alone?"

"Too many questions, impetuous sister. *Commençons par le commencement.* Where have I been? I answer, like the wind, 'Where have I not been?' Well, I was in Albania February and a bit of March, with Bertie Radcliffe. We lived on board his yacht, you know, and landed to shoot. The shooting was fair, and the yacht well found, and the cook really quite a gentleman; but it was rather a sacrifice of time. However, I didn't mind. The fact is, Bertie's wife ran away from him, as I dare say you know, last winter, and my post is ever with the afflicted."

"Particularly when they have good cooks and good shooting."

"Providence has placed me in such a sphere that I am usually called to mingle my tears with those of affluence; but, had I been born in fustian, they would have been equally at the disposal of brother chaw-bacons. We all have our missions, Lucinda. We ought all to be thankful for such chances of sacrifice as come our way. We ought not to grudge to others the more delicious depths of self-abnegation and misery with which they may have been blessed."

"Well, well, Monsieur Tartuffe, and when did you leave Sir Albert?"

"As soon as I could, kindly and consistently. Bertie benefited immensely in spirits by the shooting; and when the best of it was over, he was quite another man, and I was able to leave him. He went on to the Piræus; indeed, he wanted me to go with him; and I might have done so, but unfortunately his admirable cook fell through a hatchway and broke three of his ribs, which put him *hors de combat*, of course; and then I felt that an extra mouth to feed, in a scratch sort of way, would be a burden—so I left him. After that I went home for a week or two, and was at Newmarket for 'The Guineas.' By-the-bye, Frank, didn't you dine with me in town one night about that time?"

"Certainly not."

"Quite sure?"

"I haven't set eyes on you for eight months."

"No?" I fancied I remembered your making a row about a bad truffle at the Windham. I dare say, after all, it was old Jack Ruggles. He is just like you, you know—thinks of nothing but his grub. I believe it *was* old Jack."

"Much obliged to you for the compliment."

"Well, then, let me see, where was I? I really *was* very unfortunate at Newmarket, and my banker—you have no conception what a villain that man is, Lucy—behaved scandalously; and, altogether, it was convenient to give up a summer campaign in town; and when I heard from my old crony, Cosmo Glencairn, that he was in Florence, and going to moon about in this part of the world for a bit, I thought I might as well join him. Cosmo and I hit it off exactly. He is a quiet, studious man. Our habits are similar, and we are mutually of use to each other in our pursuits."

"Pray what are your pursuits?" asked Mr. Ravenhall.

"Severely intellectual, Frank. I am trying to solve as knotty a problem as ever knit the brows of thought."

"And what may that be?"

"I am haunted by the desire to disprove the Epicurean dictum, '*De nihilo nihil in nihilum nil posse reverti*.'—nothing from nothing is made, nothing to nothing returns. Do you know where the horrible hexameter comes from?"

"No, I don't."

"No matter. I can't remember; and of course in a parliament of plutocrats, classic lore don't pay, and you're not likely to know. But the pith of it—the major proposition—can you disprove it?"

"I think so."

"Will you back yourself against Epicurus for six hundred sovereigns?"

"You know I never bet."

"I hate a fellow who hasn't the courage of his opinions. But never mind, disprove it."

"The world was made out of nothing."

"Oh, Solomon! what a bold assertion! Nevertheless, *conceditur*. Well, but let us descend to humbler regions, and apply the case where it affects a man who hasn't the slightest desire to make a world."

"Well, well, well?"

"Well?"

"What are you driving at, man alive?"

"Man alive, I want to draw out of void a tangible something."

"Oh, you're getting beyond me."

"Exactly what my banker said when I stated this very case to him in a less abstract form—viz., that I wanted to overdraw my account, which was empty, by six hundred sovereigns. There was the void and the tangible something, all *en règle*. The fellow has no orthodoxy; when pressed, it turned out that he held with Epicurus obstinately. 'While you have no "effects,"' he said, in his hideous jargon, 'it is impossible for us to honor your drafts.' *Hinc ille lacrymæ!*"

"Oh Tom, Tom, you are incorrigible!" cried his sister. "All this fine philosophy only comes to the old, old, tiresome story."

"No one can be more tired of it than I am, Lucy."

"Then why don't you do something?"

"I piped to promotion in the Civil Service of my country till I was short of breath, but it declined to dance. In an age of mediocrity there is no market for genins."

"What are you about, then?"

"I tell you. I have been trying to confute Epicurus without success, and it's getting serious, Lucy—I can tell you, very serious. It has been serious for certain people for a long time—so my creditors assure me; but now it's becoming grave for myself. In fact, Epicurus proving correct, my immediate future is, financially speaking, rather more than cloudy. Don't you think, now, that the squire might for once—"

"No, Tom; I'm sure he won't—not 'for once,' by-the-bye, but for the tenth time. He becomes furious when your name is mentioned."

"That fellow has the soul of Cain. Well, then—" and here Tom's gaze rested mournfully on his brother-in-law.

"Don't look at me, Tom—don't look at me!" cried that gentleman hastily, and nervously buttoning his coat.

"Don't be afraid, Frank," said Tom, changing his look to one of contempt; "if the man who fell among thieves were to be similarly unfortunate a second time, do you think he would waste a glance upon the Levite? Not a bit of him. No more do I."

"Very well, then—very well," gobbled Mr. Ravenhall, with rising choler; "we're both satisfied."

"That I am satisfied, I deny; that you should be satisfied is discouraging to one who hopes for the amelioration of the species."

"Well, now," cried Mr. Ravenhall, addressing an imaginary audience—"well, now, here is a fellow who has wasted his patrimony, and thrown away his chances of getting on. Here is a fellow who is in debt—deeply in debt—for the twelfth time—"

"There have not been eleven liquidations, old man," interpolated Tom.

"A fellow, I say, who is in debt deeply, and who expects his friends to get him out of his scrapes, while he lives—lives—"

"Like a fighting-cock, you mean; but I don't—not at my own expense, at least."

"Lives, I say, a life of idle extravagance and pleasure; here is this fellow—" But here Mr. Ravenhall's eloquence failed him.

"Well," said Tom, "errors excepted, here he is; *après*?"

"Well, hang me, if he oughtn't to feel his position!"

"He does, my boy; what he complains of is, that others don't."

"Why didn't you take the secretaryship to Mr. Foozler when I got it for you?"

"I hate encouraging fraud. Mr. Foozler would have started on my brains as a first-class parliamentary speaker. Besides, I decline to cram a politician to whom my principles are opposed."

"Principles! Pray what are your principles?"

"Patriotic (and personal) conservatism."

"Patriotic fiddlesticks! They have their price, I'll be bound."

"So will I; but as yet, the price has not been offered. To return to Epicurus, I am that void out of which that nothing—radicalism—cannot be produced for nothing."

"And what the deuce does the man mean to do?"

"We go round in a circle, my legislator; the man solicits tenders of advice and assistance on that very point. The Epicureans—"

"Oh, d—n the Epicureans!" shouted Mr. Ravenhall; and, clapping his hat on his head, he bounced out of the room. Tom threw himself into a chair with a shout of laughter.

"Frank," he cried, "is evidently not a Stoic, and he curses the Epicureans; what manner of philosopher, then, is Frank?"

"You ought not to vex and tease Frank."

"Why is he so confoundedly rusty, then?"

"He is not well, poor fellow; and then your light tone about money and your difficulties vexes him. He has a great regard for you, and believes you to have ability, and can't bear to see you waste yourself. Admit, Tom, that you are provoking, and reckless, and unsatisfactory, and—"

"Altogether charming. Yes, I will admit anything to your sisterly ear; but I say, Lucy,

don't you really think you *might* draw the squire for me? I'll let him off as cheap as I can—upon my word I will; and you might even hint that if I have a good 'Leger' I might refund. I suppose, perhaps, that *would* be too strong, though. At all events, you may use full discretion."

"No, Tom."

"Come, Lucy; appeal to his brotherly feelings; say I'm looking thin and wretched. How would it do to suggest that want of proper nourishment—"

"No, no, Tom; there has been quite too much of that sort of thing already. He has never forgiven that mythical rheumatic fever in Bulgaria."

"Ah! that was awkward; but who could have expected him to turn up at Wiesbaden? What right had he to come to Wiesbaden?"

"No, Tom; there's nothing to be expected from him or any of us. You must really help yourself."

"But how?"

"Ah! that's the question. On the whole, I see nothing for it but to do as I have advised before. You must marry money."

Tom made a wry face.

"You *might* have married Miss Carter, you know; she had one hundred and thirty thousand pounds."

"Might I?"

"Every one said so."

"Except herself."

"Try to be in earnest for a moment."

"Well, failing Miss C.?"

"You must look about you."

"I can't look about me without money. Epicurus and the void meet us at every turn."

"You have seen no one suitable?"

"Not I."

"We must think."

"Well, that's cheap, at all events."

"By-the-bye, Mrs. Phillips said the Germistounes were here."

"They are."

"He is an old friend of mine; he was a great friend of poor Uncle Tom's. By-the-bye, the girl must be grown up, is she not?"

"By-the-bye, how cunning we are! Yes, she is grown up."

"And you have met her?"

"Certainly."

"And—and—"

"No, Lucy; I'm not a marrying man."

"If it is between marriage and starvation?"

"*Qu'en savez-vous*?"

"Come, Tom, be sensible. Is she nice?"

"Yes."

"And pretty?"

"Cosmo Glencairn calls her a Madonna."

"Cosmo Glencairn! hem!—does *he* admire her?"

"As a sensible man may, who can afford to be jolly *without* marrying."

"Reprobates! Well, there is an heiress for you. It must be twenty thousand pounds a year at least."

"Very likely; but there are three to a bargain in this case: self, first; damsel, second; last, but not least, angry father."

"Faint heart never won fair lady."

"I don't think it's in my line, Lucy. I don't know how to set about it; and I should get sick

of the business before the climax. She is a nice girl, and pretty, and rich, and all the rest of it—but what am I?"

"Oh, you're good-looking, and clever, and can make yourself charming if you choose, and—"

"You sweet sister! and a younger son barnacled with debts, and perhaps not of the best possible reputation."

"Why, you've done nothing *very* wrong, have you?"

"No, no—nothing that every one else *doesn't* do; but 'every one else' is a little disreputable in the eyes of the old world. Ah, that old lord! I shudder to think of his imperial aspect when I proffer my suit and tell the unvarnished tale of my impecuniosity. Besides, an heiress of *that* sort, Lucy! Surely she is above my flight?"

"Nothing and nobody are above a man's flight, if he will only use his wings perseveringly."

"But an heiress, not merely of money, not merely of lands, but of territories, mountains in the Highlands, mines in the Lowlands, tracts of arable everywhere; and last, not least, a pedigree. Good heavens! a Scotch pedigree—going back to the period of the mastodon! That is a kind of heirloom which the old lord would not like to transmit to the keeping of a mere fellow like me."

"Our family is as old as most."

"Yes; but we have none of the thin blue blood of Caledonian thanes who lived and robbed long before the heptarchy. I suspect that would be a *sine quâ non* in this case. I don't remember that there is any larceny in our pedigree."

"How did you get on with his lordship?"

"Famously. I 'compassed him with observances,' having an eye to some shooting at his place this autumn. Shooting!—by heavens! that's something like a game estate! By heavens! Lucy, if the match *did* come off, I should have quite the best general shooting I know; and if I were to buy the next place, Pockmahalakini (pretty title, by-the-bye, for an eldest son—'Baron Pockmahalakini!'), even the forest would be a good deal more than respectable. I'm not sure that I wouldn't drain the lake and plant it—part of it, at least; there's far more than enough now: part of it would be the very thing for a polo-ground. And then ponies from the Shetland Islands, crossed with Norwegian! By George! we'd have a kind of polo undreamed of at Hurlingham. We'd make it a national sport, and swear it a revival. With plenty of bagpipes and yelling, it would be accepted as the familiar recreation of Scottish royalty in the days of Kenneth M'Alpine. I myself, as 'The M'Wyedale,' in a suitable tartan invented by Poole—by that time appeased and an ally—"

"Oh, Tom, Tom! I begin to despair of you."

"Well, Lucy, enough of sorrow. Let us, for the moment, cast this matrimonial physic to the dogs. Upon my honor, I'm in a very ugly corner, and will place myself in your hands, and *will* follow your advice, if you think you see your way out of it; yea, though the gates of matrimony should have to open for me. But even for you, Lucy, my Lord of Germistounne will be a hard nut to crack. I tell him off to you, of course. Be mine the sweeter task to throw glamour over his 'Princess of Thule,' if I can; and so—

"All hail, M'Wyedale! hail to thee, Thane of Duner-lacht!"

All hail, M'Wyedale! hail to thee, Thane of Fernie-hall!"

All hail, M'Wyedale! that shalt be Pockmahalakini!"

and here comes Frank, *à la bonne heure*. Well, Frank, we've laid the ghost of Epicurus; and I've repented, reformed, and become practical. Lucy and I have been arranging a new scheme of life for your contrite brother-in-law. But of that to-morrow; and now let me have all the gossip. But first, by-the-bye, about dinner?"

"We've ordered it here at 7.30. Will you join us?"

"I am here. *Quis separabit?* A capital speech, by-the-bye, Frank, that of yours, on the Canadian Railway Guarantee business; quite to the point."

"Oh, you read that?"

"Read it? we all read it; for once your principles are mine."

"I'm glad you liked it."

"Oh, it was quite first-rate. By-the-bye, about the wine here—avoid Roederer's champagne. I hope you haven't ordered *that*? It's spurious, and they always try to force it."

"No, I hadn't ordered *any* champagne."

"Lucky, by Jove! Then—*experto crede*—order 'Pomery and Greno,' vintage '65; that's the stuff for a legislator—and his connections."

"You're an original, Tom, certainly," said Mr. Ravenhall; but he was mollified by the compliment to his speech, and the 'Pomery' was forth-coming. Tom, thus fortified, was pleased to be extremely amusing, and the party broke up at last on the most amiable terms.

"I will call on the Germistounnes to-morrow," said his sister to Tom as they separated.

"Good-night, best of sisters! and, I am sure, of sisters-in-law to be," said Tom.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. and Mrs. Francis Ravenhall were a childless couple, and, having no offspring to expend their affections upon, they supplied the blank by adopting the world, and loving it with all their hearts and with all their strength. They had begun life poor, for the Ravenhall estate had been dipped by extravagant predecessors; but minerals and other wealth-bringing developments had progressively enriched them, and at last the splendid accident that a town required to be built on the property had made them immensely wealthy. Mr. Ravenhall had the narrow selfishness, the ignoble ambitions, and that earnestness in the *cultus* of wealth, rank, and success, which constitute a worldly man, without the redeeming *savoir faire* which distinguishes a man of the world. He was also stupid at all times, and arrogant on occasion. Altogether, he was of the earth, earthy. His wife was also endowed with all the characteristics of worldliness; but this, which so deeply degrades the woman from the ideal standard of true womanliness, was qualified, in her case, by the charming attributes of a woman of the world. She had tact, adaptiveness, and a wonderful power of (spurious) sympathy. Clever and witty, she never said an ill-natured thing, or allowed her

love of a *mot* to drown prudential considerations, or to betray her into wit at the expense of friends and acquaintances, actual or possible. "Speak nothing but fair words, and you will hear nothing but kind echoes." She laid the proverb closely to her heart. One half of her life she devoted to the acquisition of new acquaintanceships—"friendships," she called them, and the other half to sifting her acquisitions. The wheat were the people who could be of some advantage to her; the chaff were the hopeless ineligible. The former were assiduously garnered; the latter were not brusquely cast into the fire: they were simply let alone, till the wind, blowing where it listed, gradually removed them from her orbit. The chaff often believed the act of separation to be due to their own carelessness or fickleness.

Such is the power of tact. Morally speaking, the husband and wife were probably on the same level, and that a sufficiently low one; but he was detested, and she was universally liked; at least, Mrs. Ravenhall, desiring to get on, had found herself heavily handicapped with such a husband. Indeed, she would probably have been altogether overweighted—probably she would have broken down—but that the change of fortune which made them so rich came in time to save them. Nevertheless, she toiled, and spun, and wheedled, and coaxed, and courted the world, so that it endured her, and almost tolerated the sight of her husband for her sake. And then, when prosperity came—wealth, great wealth—the world arose, and came forth, and took them both in its arms, and bore them up, and brought them in, and made as though they had been its favorites and darlings all along, instead of miserable, neglected gnashers of teeth, standing at the gates, in the cold and dark, hungry for faint passing smiles and strangled recognitions.

The world, having taken Mr. Ravenhall into favor, at once decided that he should be a legislator; and, since Radicalism was in vogue at the time, he became a Radical. Toryism was not a social necessity for him, since, though his family had been poor, it was very ancient, and had been eminent long ago; and he, or, rather, his wife, saw three things: first, that Radicalism was the winning side at the time; second, that a change from the creed of one's predecessors suggests individuality and a personal view; third, that the great programme of Radicalism was so cut and dried, and had been so reiterated and ventilated on platform and by press, that any one could, without any exertion, make an appearance on the programme without risk of blundering, and with some certainty of applause. To swim, as a Tory, against the tide, was a very different thing; and so Mr. Ravenhall, with no principle save his own self-interests, which English Radicalism did not seem gravely to imperil, became a Radical. His wife then noted two other things: first, that her husband's intellectual defects put any sort of political success beyond his reach; and, second, that there being thus no call for thorough-going partisanship, another kind of success was to be procured by occasional fits of recalcitrancy against the *mots d'ordre* of the party. Occasional rather eccentric junctions with the opposition—not carried too far, of course, and always labelled "conscience"—made the leaders of both parties civil

and considerate. Social advantages flowed from this; and the constituency, watching the division lists, were able, every now and then, to say that, "whatever else their member was, or was not, he had views of his own—patriotic views—and the courage of his opinions. Moreover, that he was no timeserver, that he had a strong fund of masculine common-sense, and was a bluff, straightforward Englishman."

Men who have become rich—no matter how—are generally credited in England with "masculine common-sense;" and if their bluntness and straightforwardness are only the stupid, brutal perverseness and *brusquerie* of the plebeian and the pauper, with some gilding on it, what does it matter to any one save the ruffian, who is erroneously believed to be "bluff" rather than brutal? Altogether, Mrs. Ravenhall made her husband's legislative capacity minister greatly to her social advancement; and, with a talent for utilizing everything to that end, she turned even his "bluntness" to account. Much expenditure of money was, however, necessary; and here she had a difficulty, for Mr. Ravenhall was by nature close-fisted, and many of his wife's finest projects were often in danger from a threatened stoppage of the supplies. Yet, in the end, she usually prevailed; for she had gained an ascendancy over him, founded, not on domestic love, but on the (unacknowledged) conviction that without her co-operation he would, in every department of life, be "lost to use, and name, and fame."

"Then I have done with the matter, Frank. Take your own way, and see what you can make of it."

These words, pronounced firmly, and a firm refusal to urge or listen to further argument, were generally effective, and, as time went on, had less and less to be put in requisition.

Grand were the entertainments of the member for the county of —. His country place became the centre of county life and fashion. Notable were his banquets in Belgrave Square. Great people were notoriously to be met there—ministers and diplomatists, strong men in finance, subtle men of law, mighty men of letters and of valor, poets, gastronomers, projectors, thinkers, and talkers; Haroun al Raschid, occasionally—and Ali Baba, from the Stock Exchange, pleasantly often. Nor was the more difficult sex deficient. There were ladies of the right sort, plentiful and cordial, stamping Mr. and Mrs. Ravenhall with the *cachet* of fashion. Social success is often stated to be of the nature of a fluke. One constantly hears it said that, to people of equal advantages, Fortune arbitrarily awards success or failure. This looks like the truth very often indeed; but examine more closely, and you will find at the bottom of success a subtle, unobtrusive, social talent, and the capability of a sleepless attention to the minutiae of the code of *bienséances*, so that the candidate for success may not only not be guilty of offense against the same, but not even be brought, or bring others, into any sort of association with profane ideas.

This subtle talent and this capability Mrs. Ravenhall fully possessed. If she had had daughters of even moderate attractions, it is scarcely doubtful that so admirable a priestess of Mammon, in placing them upon the altar of her god, would have managed to see that the temple sup-

plied combustibles of the costliest and most distinguished description. Having none, however, her great faculties involved a certain waste of power. If she loved any one in the world, she really loved her brother Tom; and for him, indeed, she would have schemed matrimonially, and doubtless triumphed, if only he would have co-operated. But, even in these days, a courtship can hardly be carried on by one principal, however skillfully the missing party may be represented by his second; and Tom, regarding matrimony merely as a specific for the preservation of large balances in bank, his ideas and intentions thereon changed with the spasmodic rapidity of his financial condition.

As an instance, he was once on the very edge of the holy estate, but forty-eight hours' continuous rain immediately preceding the Derby Day, threw out the favorite, against whom Tom had gone heavily; and a golden shower absolving him for the time from matrimonial necessities, he disappeared abruptly, and wrote, shortly after, to his sister, under date "Hombourg," to the effect that she must "square it somehow with Miss —, seeing that, for the present, Providence had rescued him from the 'abyss.'" Under many such discouragements, Mrs. Ravenhall, if she had relaxed her efforts, had not abandoned hope; and occasionally, when Tom was known to be in an unusual state of dilapidation, she advanced some new project, and never at least lost an opportunity of preaching her gospel to him. Mainly from personal motives, but partly, too, at the instance of his wife, Mr. Ravenhall had inflexibly refused to assist Tom in his recurring crises; but as it was generally through his sister as mediator that he did, or rather attempted to do, what he called his "family financing," she was, as a rule, cognizant of the state of his affairs.

Now it happened that she was at this time, though indirectly, very well informed on the subject, and knew Tom to be in the deepest possible water. It also happened that she knew a great deal more of his whereabouts and surroundings than she pretended or he imagined. In fact, the sudden diversion from Milan was by no means the sudden, improvised raid she gave it out to be; nor was it by any means unconnected with the fact that, in addition to her brother, Miss Douglas, the heiress of Lord Germistounne, was domiciled by the romantic waters of Como. Here were golden opportunities! Here was a concurrence of circumstances that seemed to lend themselves to the consolidation of her scapegrace brother and his affairs. Propinquity, a monotonous life, with beautiful surroundings; the season of the year "when a young man's (or maiden's) fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love;" the opportunities of free country intercourse—these, and many other points as favorable to the birth and growth of the tender passion, were noted by this practical observer of human nature. Then Tom's necessities being added to these, it appeared to her that his fascinations might safely be trusted to do the rest. She was not likely, therefore, to forget her resolution to open the campaign at once. But here Mr. Ravenhall was a difficulty. She knew all about Lord Germistounne—his antocratic disposition, his fierce prejudices, his narrow Toryism; and she felt that, without both luck and management, things would

not go smoothly between the noble lord and the bluff member for —shire. But, to suit her plans, things *must* go smoothly; otherwise the necessary intercourse would be impossible. To laugh off his lordship's attacks, which would certainly be forth-coming, and disarm him by good-humor, and even by playfully carrying the war into the enemy's camp—she saw that these were the only tactics; but how to have them carried out—there was the difficulty: for her husband, though subservient enough to rank and wealth, was beginning to swell somewhat in his own esteem; and as for anything in the way of light and genial banter, that was not to be expected of him. He was bluff; and to ask him to be bluff and playful at once, was like inviting an elephant to get on its hind legs and conduct itself like a kangaroo.

Waking early on the morning after her meeting with Tom, she revolved all these considerations in her politic mind, and decided that Ravenhall must be drilled to play an entirely secondary rôle, in the first place at least—she herself proposing to receive the earliest shock of the noble Tory's attack. All she proposed for her husband, for the present, was that he should be silent; wear, if possible, a gay smile; shake his head in comic deprecation when Lord Germistounne was unusually violent; and honor anything approaching a *bon-mot*, even at his own expense, with peals of frank laughter, which should imply that, in the presence of so much wit, even Principle was obliged to cover its face with its pocket-handkerchief and shake its sides in its own despite.

The "Pomery and Greno" of the night before had, however, settled the matter otherwise. It had disagreed with Mr. Ravenhall; and he, awaking with a headache, proved to be entirely intractable. He used a good deal of rough language about Lord Germistounne, Toryism, Tom, love, debt, the champagne, even about his own head, and was clearly minded to be as bluff and bouncing and abominable as need be, against all comers, without respect to weight or age.

"Well, then, Frank," said his wife, at last, "we'll say no more about it at present. You have got a headache, and your headaches are always tragedies. You'll see things differently tomorrow. You'd better lie still in bed, and I'll take Tom with me instead. On second thoughts, I believe it will be every way the better plan. I'll take Tom."

Whereupon her lord freely assented that she should take Tom, and proceed with him into outer darkness, and even remain there permanently if so disposed.

Tom looked rather rueful when summoned by his sister to accompany her. He had pledged himself with a light heart the night before to follow his sister's guidance, with only the condition that she was to pilot him out of his difficulties—with a light heart, lightened by dry champagne, and with that recklessness, common to men of his character, which, to stave off a disagreeable subject for the immediate present, will discount even the immediate future, and purchase, with any sort of pledge, a hazy, temporary conviction "that all will come right somehow." His maxim was to keep the present "jolly," and let the future look after itself. "It is better," he would say, "to have lots of sun, with occasional violent

thunder-storms, than to live always under a drizzle and a drab-colored sky. I would rather have a good strong agony once in six months or so, and take it neat, than go on sipping agony-and-water all the days of my life." He hated the idea of the future. For him it was simply a dun with a bill, or a peremptory banker with an overdue acceptance—an undiluted "agony" in some shape or other. So that it was rather with a feeling of ill-usage and of being prematurely hustled that he found himself brought to book on his undertaking, not a day old, and compelled to open the distasteful campaign of love-making.

"Of course I'll go, Lucy," he said, "because I promised; but it's awfully sudden. I thought you were to feel your way a bit."

"There is no time to lose, Tom."

"Marriage is the very devil, Lucy."

Perhaps Mrs. Ravenhall's experiences pointed to the same conclusion; but she, too, retorted that there were many other devils familiar to Tom, and feared by him, that were more formidable; and, silenced by this argument, he went meekly to the villa.

All Mrs. Ravenhall's charms of manner and conversation—and they were many—were brought into requisition at the visit. She dug up her uncle—the "jolly Tom Wyedale" of Lord Germistoun's early friendship—a man who had been the privileged parliamentary humorist of his time, the Yorick in a circle of brilliant wits, the delight of clubs, of *salons*, of all "*quantum est hominum venustiorum*"—she dug him up, and ventilated him and his epoch very thoroughly, adroitly reflecting his glory upon his ancient friend. She then proceeded to display the brilliancy which she had inherited from Uncle Yorick, and to captivate, as he had captivated, the old gentleman whom she was anxious to get into her toils. Her success was complete. Lord Germistoun's conquest was absolute; so that, when he did get upon politics, he was graciously pleased to say that Radicalism could not be all bad if it found an adherent in Mrs. Ravenhall. Whereupon she earnestly but playfully disclaimed the awful epithet "Radical," for self and even for partner.

"We are only progressive," she said—"gently progressive. We are not partisans; we have a conscience. Sometimes our conscience tells us to progress, gently; sometimes it bids us obstruct, firmly. But, *entre nous*, if things go much farther, we *shall* have to shift our side—*entre nous*, very strictly, please, dear Lord Germistoun."

"The Irish Church—" began Lord Germistoun.

"Oh, please, pray don't talk of that most distressing subject. If you knew what we suffered, and suffer, about that hazardous measure, you would spare me."

"I am sure I have no wish to give you pain."

"It is the worst of following conscience, that it often misleads one, and then turns round and rebukes one, as if one had misled it."

"The only remedy is to be thoroughly partisan. The collective conscience of a party is more reliable than any individual one."

"One almost begins to despair of seeing any other remedy; but then to follow the conscience of the Liberal party à outrance, that would be simply impos— But you must not make me

talk treason, my lord—while it *is* treason," she added, with a meaning smile; "and, apropos, may I beg you to be gentle with my husband on political matters when you meet him? He is much perturbed in mind just now; and I could wish none but calm influences to bear upon him while the *struggle* is going on."

Whereupon the lady was assured that her wish was his lordship's law in all matters, and that the wind of his noble logic and satire should be tempered to the Radical lamb, albeit still unshorn of his evil Radical fleece.

And then she changed the subject, and asked Lord Germistoun frankly, as an old family friend, what he thought of Tom, and if he did not find in that worthy strong traits of resemblance to Uncle Yorick. And his lordship's answer being very hearty and satisfactory on these points, she proceeded to dilate upon Tom's excellences of head and heart—his brilliancy, his shrewdness, his common-sense—all wasted, however, for want of a career. "Can we do nothing for him, Lord Germistoun? Can we find no means of turning so much talent to account? He is a red-hot Tory, you know; and they say your party is to be in soon. The party ought to keep an eye on its brilliant young men."

"True, true—very true. We must see—we must see. I think there need be no difficulty about finding him a seat before long."

"The worst of it is, that poor Tom was extravagant at Cambridge—fell into bad hands—and he really wants money. Now, a seat would hardly meet that difficulty, would it?"

Lord Germistoun feared not, but suggested that a likely young fellow such as Tom might very well feather his nest by matrimony, as a preliminary step to adorning the House, and eventually the cabinet. Saul also was among the prophets.

Here Mrs. Ravenhall shook her head. She was, she said, perhaps a little romantic, and could not pretend to like the idea of mercenary marriages. Still, of course, love and money *might* come together—might come together, very likely, with a little skill and management. But as for Tom, he was altogether impracticable on this point—quite foolishly quixotic about it, the dear fellow was. The idea of marrying a woman *for* money was in his eyes such an abomination that it was doubtful if he could be brought to marry a woman *with* money, even where his affections were strongly engaged. At all events, the attraction of the heart would require to be something out of the common run if it were to subdue this *idée fixe*.

Lord Germistoun, from the superior eminence of the worldling, laughed at all this; but was confiding enough to believe in Tom's sincerity, and to think it high-minded. "But, mark my words, dear lady: let the chance come, and the love, and all the other things, and he'll reconcile himself to the hard fate of marrying a fortune—ha, ha!"

Mrs. Ravenhall again shook her head, in denial of her devout aspiration; she shook it pretty firmly this time, for they were treading delicate ground, and changed the subject. She changed it, however, neatly, and to her brother's advantage. "Tom," she said, "is more wedded to sport at present than anything else, and his earnestness about it is quite too comic. This morn-

ing he is in a state of despair about his autumn plans. It appears that he and his friend Mr. Glencairn were to have taken a shooting together somewhere in the Highlands—near your beautiful place, I think; and after it was all arranged, as I understand, Mr. Glencairn takes it into his head that he will travel instead, and poor Tom is left in the lurch, without his shooting. Is it not a shame? Poor Tom! he has so little amusement!"

"Ah! I don't fancy that friend of his. It is quite what was to be expected. Distinctly monstrous! But let him come to me instead—let him come to me. We have shooting enough at Dunerlacht to satisfy him, I'll be bound. Let him come, and stay as long as he likes. He's the best of company; he'll never wear out his welcome. I think he'll be better off with me than with that solemn fellow with the theatrical name. I say, Wyedale, I've just been saying to your sister that I hope you'll console yourself for the loss of your shooting partner by coming to Dunerlacht for the 'Twelfth;' and the longer you can stay, the better I'll be pleased."

It is needless to say that Tom joyfully accepted. And his sister, feeling that she had acquitted herself brilliantly with the papa, crossed the room, like a coruscation of sunbeams, to fascinate the daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH that young lady Tom had, indeed, made but a lame appearance, from the point of view of a suitor consciously commencing a siege. There is nothing like an *arrière-pensée*, at least in the case of minds tolerably ingenuous, for blunting the conversational faculties, freezing the ideas, and letting loose in talk all that surface *débris* which hangs about all minds, and does duty for ideas with stupid people. There is nothing, therefore, that for the moment so completely levels the clever man with the idiot as an *arrière-pensée*. Tom was, of course, laboring under this disability, and with circumstances of aggravation, for he could hardly bring himself to look upon the *arrière-pensée* as his own property. It was part of a game of his sister's, which, rather sulkily and with a half heart, he was helping her to play. Such is gratitude; but hence he felt doubly numb and stupid. It is doubtful whether Tom, though an Englishman, had ever talked about the weather, as a necessity, before. Now, however, he atoned for past neglect of that pathetic subject, and handled it with the length and insistence which enthusiasts bestow upon a fresh topic.

Esmè, who had heard him converse before, and always with a sort of bright spontaneity that broke out upon all sorts of topics, fancied at first that this atmospheric attack was merely a bit of fan and irony, and expected for some time the development of the joke. In vain. Through many a dreary period the vicissitudes of the barometer were canvassed; and though he went conscientiously round the dial, he made, as sailors say, "bad weather of it" all round. Somehow, at last, Cosmo Glencairn's name was introduced; and Tom, finding a subject with which he was familiar, and a listener whose interest seemed to awaken, fastened upon it, and flashed

into eloquence upon the theme. Apropos of what, he knew not, but away he went at score upon Cosmo's merits. He really liked him, and cherished—what might seem strange in such a nature—a carefully concealed respect for a character so different from his own, and for ways of life and thought which he dimly felt to be higher and better than his own. Now this feeling had free voice. Tom was not conscious of giving a biography of his friend; nor was he conscious that an occasional suggestive remark, or trifling query, led him, in effect, to do so. His fun rather came back to him, and his biographical essay took a serio-comic turn; but, as there was nothing about Cosmo, except perhaps an occasional excess of earnestness, to which ridicule could really attach, the good-natured satire only imparted that flavor of dispraise necessary to make panegyric palatable to human nature, which abhors unqualified perfection. Esmè did not conceal her interest.

"These things to hear
Did Desdemona seriously incline;"

and, on being told of Cosmo's itinerations in the pursuit of self-culture, she declared that they displayed a kind of zeal and thoroughness that was to be envied, and a dash of romance and picturesqueness which transformed the dry and dusty paths to knowledge into ways of poetic beauty and delight.

"What an ideal life!" she cried; "how enviable he is to wish to lead it, and then to be able to do what he wishes!"

"Is that the sort of life *you* would like to lead?" asked Tom.

"If I were fit for it; but I am afraid I should not persevere. Mr. Glencairn has actually persevered in it for several years?"

"Yes, he has been on the prowl for about three years."

"Magnificent!"

Tom laughed loudly.

"It is not *your* ideal life, then?"

Tom laughed still more heartily. "No, Miss Douglas; I'm afraid it would bore me to extinction. I should be like the pilgrim walking to Mecca or Jerusalem with pease in his shoes."

"Yet you and Mr. Glencairn are great friends."

"Yes, we are; and the funniest thing of all is, not that I like him, but that he likes me."

"Well, but is it not quite proverbial that men of talent—" Here Esmè broke down, blushing to find herself on the brink of an involuntary rudeness; but recovering rapidly, said, "I believe I was about to say something very stupid. Where is Mr. Glencairn going to next?"

"I really don't know. I was in hopes he was going to content himself with Scotland for the autumn; but he was in one of his moods yesterday afternoon, and spoke of setting out for fifty different points of the compass instead."

"I think Mr. Glencairn said he was very fond of Scotland?"

"Oh yes—immensely fond of it; but then, when a fellow once fancies he has a 'mission,' he takes to thwarting himself and friends in the most deplorable way."

"What is Mr. Glencairn's mission?"

"Heaven only knows! I believe he is still hunting for it."

"He will find it if he is so much in earnest; and when he finds it, he will likely fulfil it. Don't you think so?"

"I dare say he will. In the mean time he threatens to run through my mission."

"Your mission, Mr. Wyedale? Pray what is that?"

"Oh, my views are lowly; for the autumn my mission was to shoot with him at Finmore."

"And that is not to be?"

"I fear not; but Lord Germistounne's kindness in asking me to shoot at Dunerlacht quite makes up for the disappointment, if my friend does break down—more than makes up for it."

"I fear we shall not be able to compensate you for the loss of your friend's society; we are very dull and stupid people at Dunerlacht."

"But *you* will be there?" said Tom, suddenly mindful of the rôle he ought to be playing.

"Oh yes; we shall be at home, naturally."

"Then—then I don't think I shall miss Cosmo much."

Miss Douglas opened her eyes a little at this rather straight plunge of Tom's, and said, "I am afraid you are too sanguine, Mr. Wyedale. But I hope you won't have to depend for your society exclusively on papa and me. I believe we are to have, for us, quite a large party this year."

Tom was off at once on the wings of fancy to the moors. "What splendid shooting it must be!" he said; "and, by-the-bye, Miss Douglas, have you any idea how they work the duck on the lake? There is a tremendous margin of sedge. I looked down at it once from the high-road. Punts would be the only plan. Are there punts?"

"I really can't tell you, Mr. Wyedale. I'm not at all a sportswoman."

"Ah! I'm afraid if there were punts you would be certain to know; don't you think so? I suspect there can't be punts. I wonder if Lord Germistounne has ever thought of them?"

"I'm afraid I'm quite ignorant of all shooting matters."

"That lake has immense capabilities, Miss Douglas. I wouldn't go in for big swivel-guns, you know—that's not my idea of sport; but without some sort of punt the lake must be wasted—absolutely squandered. With a punt I would undertake to make the ducks reflect to any extent."

"Then for your sake, if not for the ducks, I hope there is a punt."

"One might rig up something of the sort simply enough, to be sure. Glencairn and I once managed the business that way on one of the big Canadian lakes. We made a sort of raft, you know, and fenced it round with sedge and scrub, so that it looked like a floating island."

"Did you make the Canadian ducks reflect?"

"Yes; I suspect they won't forget us and our raft in a hurry. We slated them."

"Is Mr. Glencairn a good shot?"

"Excellent. He does everything he *does* do well."

"I suppose he is always in earnest about everything he does?"

"That's the secret, perhaps. It would bore me, now, to be in earnest about anything, except, of course, sport, and" (observing his sister's suggestive eye upon him)—"and, of course, one or two other serious matters."

Esmé laughed. "I wonder," she said, "what you would rank with sport as serious matters?"

"Hang it!" thought Tom, "she's laughing at me; I'm on the wrong tack, somehow;" but he jerked out a sentence to the effect that "for every man there is something sacred and serious," and then remembering immortal Mr. Guppy and his refrain, "There *are* chords," had well-nigh broken down.

"So that you *have* profited by Mr. Glencairn's society; you are not altogether an unworthy disciple," laughed Esmé.

"Disciple? God forbid! I'm not a disciple at all. I wouldn't go in for Glencairn's line of business for the world. Life is too short."

"Still, for every man there is something sacred and serious—you are convinced of that?" said Esmé, with profound gravity.

"Oh, of course I am, and—and—all that kind of thing, you know." Then their eyes met, and they both went off into hearty fits of laughter.

"I have always understood," thought Tom, "that if a woman once laughs at you, you may as well cry 'off' at once, and throw up the sponge. Now this girl is laughing at me—and small blame to her; and I feel that, if I were ever so much in love with her, I couldn't get on the proper tack—not to-day, at least. I suspect after dinner would be my only chance. I believe moonlight has a wonderful effect upon the female nature; and dry champagne (in sufficient quantities) has almost made me sentimental once or twice. Yes, I *must* try it some other time, under more favorable circumstances. At present I can't score, that's clear." Then, seeing his sister cross the room, he rose and said, "I must go and sound Lord Germistounne about the punts." And thus ended the first scene of Tom's little drama, "L'Amoureux malgré lui."

And then came Mrs. Ravenhall, and, with full confidence in her social versatility, approached the task of fascinating Esmé, of whom she knew nothing, except that she was a very young undergraduate in London life. And very charming she made herself, in a bright, genial, cheery way, that could not but be acceptable to any well-conditioned nature. But as a skilful tactician behind his skirmishers watches to detect the points at which the enemy may most readily be open to impression, so, from behind her sunny smiles and gay *espèglerie*, peered forth the intent worldling, striving to decipher the character of the young lady before her. The Highlanders at Prestonpans, and the Maories rushing from their "pahs," disconcerted regular troops by their unsophisticated method of dealing with conventional modes of attack and defense; and, to a person entirely conventional, there is probably nothing more indecipherable than a character which, supposing it not to be commonplace, displays only the color of its own individuality, and reflects none of the stereotyped features of manner, thought, and so forth, which belong to some one or other of the various social coteries lying within the ken of the conventional observer. In this way Esmé somewhat puzzled Mrs. Ravenhall. Her simplicity and candor would have been easily comprehended; but, blended with a straightforward shrewdness and keenness of insight, and a certain independence of thought, they were, on the whole, paradoxical. And then, although nothing could be more remote from her nature than affected non-

chalance and strong-minded idiosyncrasies, there was in her a strange ignorance of, indifference to, even a want of reverence for, persons, things, and ways of life that are sacred and canonical to people, the final cause of whose existence it is to be in the best society.

And thus, when Mrs. Ravenhall settled down for a cosy talk, and unfolded the usual staples of cosy conversation among people of her stamp and class, she experienced a series of shocks. It seemed so startling to be called upon to explain who was who at every sentence. Extremes meet; and a kiuship is established between Belgravia and the Backwoods by this one touch of nature, that the denizens of either paradise, in conversing with outsiders—that is to say, with the world at large—assume, with primeval simplicity, that, to all the world, the inhabitants of their little *monde*, and all that is done, said, or thought therein are matters of familiar knowledge. Among the redskins, "Hooker Jim's" squaw will dilate to you, by the hour, upon "Horny-eyed Houlaoua's" infamous conduct to *his* squaw and papposes, and all the outs and ins of the difficulties between "Hairy Samky" and "Wingery Bong," as if these nature's nobles and their deeds were known as the sun, moon, and stars.

And, exactly in the same way, you will be muddled, puzzled, driven half crazy among the fine ladies and gentlemen of the *crème de la crème* and (*nota bene*) their *umbras*—if you happen to be an outsider. For you will have imputed to you, and expected of you, a complete familiarity with the attributes, connections, daily lives, and execratiating nicknames of those who live, and move, and have their being in the fashionable microcosm, though the renown of them has never reached your darling orbit. There is something fresh, childlike, and almost touching in this, when it is an attribute of aboriginal simplicity; but when you regard it as a trait of British high-breeding, "*risum teneatis amici*?" The word "British" is used advisedly and with emphasis: for, against this result of a profound yet parochial egotism, the well-bred Russian is protected by his cosmopolitanism; the Frenchman by his accuracy; the German by his matter-of-factness; and the Italian by that delightful outcome of a national character filtered through countless generations of breeding, that captivating and gracious gift of sympathy which adorns him and helps to make him what he is—the best-bred and most lovable of men.

Pardon the digression, and let us return to Mrs. Ravenhall, who, stamped in all respects with the pattern of her *monde*, awoke, with a series of shocks, to the fact that Esmè was something very like a pagan. She was positively ignorant of the habits of Mrs. Chesterfield Beauregard. She knew nothing to the discredit of Lady Diana Potiphar. She hadn't even heard that the Hon. and Rev. Joseph Jellyfish had been quite exculpated by the bishop. Then, as for the exploits of Donjie St. Bees, they were a sealed letter for her; and the vitticisms of Jam Haverel (actually of JAM Haverel!), a closed book. Was it possible that she was in ignorance of what went on that night at Drawem Castle?—that night, you know, when the Duchess of Groats lost two thousand pounds at *écarté*? and Lady Mabilia Fantod danced *such* a funny

dance at the top of the staircase with the Marquis de Saut-du-Loup? What! not know about *that* night when Algie Montfort behaved so shockingly to Prince von Pickelhauben?—put a tame fox in the prince's bed, you know, so that the prince's lower limbs were terribly lacerated, and he couldn't go to Doncaster for the Leger—and that, of course, was the very Leger which entirely ruined poor Pix Puffinson. How foolish, by-the-bye, of Pix to go off with Lady Wallsend, when he *knew* he had nothing, and she had nothing! No wonder Lady Anne was furious; and really, what the dear duke said about poor Pix was only what he deserved—don't you think so? But ah! by-the-bye, you don't know anything about any of them. Then genealogies—Abraham begat Isaac, etc., etc., etc. Such and such-like subjects could not, as Mrs. Ravenhall found, be employed as a means of amusing and fascinating Esmè, or of testing the points of view from which she looked out upon life and the world. If you never talk about anything but yourself, your neighbors, and their affairs, it is difficult, upon occasion, to have recourse to abstract subjects; and Mrs. Ravenhall was in that predicament. However, with a rapid change of front, she abandoned the Donjies, and the Algies, and the Pixes, and the dukes and duchesses, as meat too strong for this weakling babe, and did her best to be charming on "certain things in general;" and, with a good deal of froth and gush and sunbeam, she contrived to make herself felt to be what a young man would have called a "very jolly woman," and what a well-ordered damsel would describe as "so good-natured, and bright, and merry."

"You must let me see a great deal of you, dear Miss Douglas," she said, at last; "we have no friends here, and you must really patronize us as much as you can. We want rest, repose, sunshine, quiet amusement. Do help us. We must do things together. Now, promise to be our *cicerone*."

Then Esmè promised to do her best, though disclaiming local knowledge.

"Oh, but," cried Mrs. Ravenhall, taking her cue from one or two chance remarks of Esmè's—"oh, but my brother Tom tells me you are a wonderful artist, and so accomplished and clever!"

"I wonder how Mr. Wyedale discovered all these perfections!" said Esmè.

"Oh, Tom doesn't say much, but he sees a great deal—very clearly Tom sees. Such a shrewd judge of character, too, he is; and *such* an admirer of everything beautiful, a fanatic about scenery and art—quite a fanatic, I protest."

Remembering Tom's recent conversation and tolerably frank account of himself, Esmè felt there was something about this fanaticism which required explanation—in fact, that there must be a mistake somewhere. She said nothing, however; and Mrs. Ravenhall, having uttered a few more valedictory sweetnesses, clasping Esmè's hand with one of hers, and softly patting it with the other, finally took her leave.

"Come away, Tom," she said—"we must not waste more of Lord Germistoun's valuable time; and I know you will never think of moving if I don't actually carry you off. Come"—and they went, with many mutual resolves, heartily ex-

pressed, to "do things together," and see much of each other.

"Well, Tom?" said his sister as they walked down the avenue.

"Well, *Lucy*?" replied Tom, with an emphasis that implied that any revelations that had to be made ought to come from her side.

"Well, she is nice and pretty."

"Nothing fresher to communicate?"

"She rather puzzles me."

"Does she? She rather frightens *me*—in my new capacity, that is— But what perplexes you, Lucy?"

"I can't quite tell you. She knows nothing of the world—of our world, which ought to be hers—and yet she is not like a raw, country girl. She doesn't seem to know that she knows nothing of the world; or, at all events, she sees nothing to regret in her ignorance. And then she is quite self-possessed. I'm afraid she has character and originality. I'm almost afraid she's a sort of girl who thinks for herself."

"How shocking! But, after all, why shouldn't she, if it amuses her?"

"Well, you know, all that sort of thing is not in your favor. I had hoped to find a page with no writing on it, ready to be written over by the first moderately skilful hand that made the attempt; but she is not *that*. I had expected a little blushing rose of the wilderness; but she is not *that*."

"How oratorical! Well, you think that the rose is not for my button-hole, nor the page destined to receive my autograph?"

"I don't say that; but the situation is quite different from what I expected. The difficulties are with you, however. What I fear is, not that you can't succeed—for you can, if you try—but that you won't take trouble, won't persevere. You have a part to play, and you must play it. You must study it—adapt your style, tone, and sentiment; and, above all things, be in earnest. I am sure she is truly lovable."

"So am I. She will have twenty or thirty thousand a year."

"And do give up that hard way of talking. It grows upon people till it becomes mechanical. It is exactly the sort of tone that won't suit Miss Douglas. How did you get on with her just now? What did you talk about?"

"I didn't get on well, that's certain. I think she was inclined to laugh at me."

"Surely you didn't say anything premature?"

"No, no; but I was self-conscious, and a self-conscious man always makes an ass of himself."

"What did you talk about?"

"I'll be hanged if I know! Yes, by-the-bye, I think it was principally about Cosmo Glencairn."

"What! the man who's here?"

"Yes; he has been in your house two or three times—dined with you, I fancy—certainly been at your balls."

"Oh, I remember him very well; pleasant, isn't he?"

"Tremendously."

"But what does she know about him?"

"Knows *all* about him *now*. I've told her all about him; quite exhausted the subject. Besides, she's met him two or three times here."

"But what possessed you to talk about *him*?"

"Well, I was short of subjects, and Cosmo

was the only one that seemed to fetch her. I tried her with various topics, but somehow we always drifted back to Cosmo. We had a little round about duck-shooting, but even that turned into Cosmo. To tell you the truth, he was rather a godsend to me."

"What a goose you are, Tom!"

"Thanks. If you had said so half an hour ago, when I was among the ducks, I would have agreed with you heartily."

"Is Mr. Glencairn a marrying man? He is very handsome, and clever, and rich."

"No; I've told you already he is *not* a marrying man; and if you are jealous of him on my account, calm yourself. Old Germistounne has taken a dislike to him, and has been rude and bearish; and Cosmo's soul is in arms. He won't go near the place again."

"Oh, that matters nothing if *she* is interested in him!"

"Tut, Lucy, how earnest you are! What can it matter if he doesn't think of her or see her?"

"You can't be too careful. Remember how much depends on your making the most of such an opportunity. His lordship is a terrible old bore."

"Isn't he? But he has redeeming points."

"Oh, of course; he is a thorough old aristocrat."

"And he has the best mixed shooting in Scotland."

"There you go! You must ingratiate yourself with him."

"It is done. His lordship has the clear-seeing eye toward me."

"Don't neglect him, then."

"I won't—I won't."

"You must woo him almost as much as his daughter."

"I will—I will. Concealment shall not prey on my damask cheek."

"By-the-bye, you'd better dine with us to-day, and bring Mr. Glencairn. I must investigate him."

"Certainly, provided the legislative head is sound again. Frank with a headache is fit company neither for man nor beast."

"Oh, his head will be quite well by dinner-time."

"*Va bene!*"

CHAPTER IX.

THE dinner-party did not come off, however; or, rather, it did not include Cosmo. When his friend went to look for him, he found that he had started early in the morning and crossed the lake; and from this solitary excursion he did not return till the evening was far advanced. The truth is, that sleep had brought no refreshment either to his body or his mind. He awoke with the perplexities of the previous day weighing heavily on his spirit; aggravated, indeed, by daylight. If the mystic moon had for a moment charmed to sleep some of his troubles, the realistic sun roused them again into vigorous action. "Hide me from day's garish eye," is a prayer which finds an echo in all heavy hearts. Thus, to Cosmo in his present mood, while movement was an alleviation, solitude was a necessity; and so, long before the world of luxury was astir, he

had risen and passed away across the lake, and up among the hills beyond, seeking, as by an instinct, some place of silence and shade, somewhat apart from men, a little sheltered from the intolerable joyousness of the summer morning. There, wandering to and fro, among the woods and rocks, he took up the thread of his last night's meditations. The gloomy train of his thoughts moved round and round in a monotonous circle. He arraigned, and after leading evidence, he condemned himself. From whatever point of view he looked at his past history and present position, he saw that he was "an unprofitable servant." If Hope and Common-sense suggested that twenty-eight years, though a great age, are still not exactly man's allotted span, and that there might yet be time to atone for past shortcomings, he straightway found himself wandering in a labyrinth of projects, each in its nature wide asunder as the poles from all the rest, and each to be rejected in turn as not the path to take. Now, it was his own incompetency that seemed to bar the way; now, it was the inadequacy of the end to be attained that warned him back. Underlying all his mental conflicts there was a feverish restlessness, new to his experience, which led him to turn to many unreasonable projects, and, finally, to reject all projects, reasonable or the reverse. He said to himself that it was a sphere of active and at least useful exertion which he had to find. He said it languidly, but his thoughts travelled over a sufficiently large area in the quest.

In this age there are many outlets for restlessness—sanctioned, almost sanctified, by science. The sources of the Nile are still to discover, the North Pole has not yet been reached; and, besides these great standing challenges of Nature, there is always something inviting scientific Bohemianism to distant and uncomfortable regions for purposes of discovery or observation. One or two of these, in vogue at the time, suggested themselves to Cosmo. But missionary zeal in the cause of science would not be roused. He felt, indeed, that his scientific attainments were too weak to justify or support such high-pressure action, and so he was off at a tangent in an opposite direction—a direction which showed how abnormal was his state of mind. For it was to the Carlist war he turned. Fiercely in progress then, it seemed to promise a career of romance and adventure—an opening for one who could play the part of a guerilla leader. There was much to touch the imagination in such a life. Ah! but a career of romance and adventure! Was this his quest? No. His quest was a sphere of active and useful exertion. The service of Don Carlos was an active enough sphere, but was it useful? Was it not even dishonorable, as far as he could be concerned in it? Don Carlos was not his king, nor the Catholic faith his faith. To join the Carlists, therefore, would practically be to turn filibuster and renegade. A score of similarly wild projects were similarly canvassed and dismissed, and, with them, many others more practicable. Among the rest, two, which, as alternatives, had all along been, more or less vaguely, the horizon of promise to which he looked, and these were the careers of literature and politics. But, to-day, by the morbid play of Cosmo's thoughts, they were associated, on terms of equality, with the most

chimerical projects, and dismissed with almost equal *brusquerie*.

By what right could he address himself in earnest to the career of letters? What had he to say to the world? Could he teach it anything? He had read, indeed, and travelled much, and even thought a little. So had others. He had no *spécialité*. Were not his thoughts but commonplace deductions from the commonplace experiences of a mediocre man? Could he amuse the world, then? There was an incongruousness about the idea to-day that almost made him smile.

Well, then, politics. Here, indeed, he had earnest opinions and convictions, a fine ideal of what English political life ought to be, and of the rationale of English statesmanship. He had often dreamed of a political career for himself—often, indeed, awaking from his dream to see that his aspirations, when compared with the actual spirit of the age, would involve what the spirit of the age would jeer at as a political Utopia. But to-day he had eyes for nothing but the imperfections of our system. He could see nothing but a selfish, unpatriotic democratism on one side—on the other, a tentative spirit of stop-gap and compromise; and, between the two, the chaotic mass of the general body politic, steeped in morbid lethargy, and only roused into occasional spasms of passion by a detestable system of agitation. Before these conditions he recoiled to-day. Real heroism ought not to be deterred by the dangers and difficulties confronting it. But to-day Cosmo's heroism slept; he felt paralyzed before the dead and stony aspect of English political life, and turned from the subject, as he had often done before, muttering,

"Dreamer of dreams born out of my due time!

Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

In all his musings of to-day, with the ostensible purpose above recorded, Cosmo was now and then conscious of a half-heartedness in his investigations, and conscious, at last, that the real reason why he rejected every outlet was a conviction that there *was* nothing at all in the way of personal achievement that was worth undertaking, whether for the mere sake of effort, or for the end that might be attained.

Others might do better than he what had to be done. If they did not, it did not signify; if he remained unproductive, it would not signify; if he blossomed into achievement, it could not signify. Nothing did, would, or could signify. After hours of mental struggle and perturbation, this lugubrious conclusion seemed to be the one point definitely reached.

At last, exhausted and oppressed with the heat of the drowsy afternoon, he fell asleep upon the ground, and, pursuing through slumber the tenor of his waking thoughts, he dreamed that he lay in the first circle of Dante's "Inferno;" and with this addition to the sufferings of those who dwelt therein, that whereas they had Desire without Hope, in him Hope and Desire were alike dead. It was twilight when he awoke—twilight in the sky, but night in the coppice where he lay; and, as he started to his feet, the illusion of his dream was still upon him. Every tree about his resting-place was one of that weird Dantean forest of a lower circle, and the sound of the evening breeze stirring the foliage the eternal burden of lamenting souls.

"A dismal dream!" he exclaimed, "as the world of reality forced itself upon him; "and from evil dreams how often one awakes to cry, 'Thank God! a dream and nothing more!' but now, now, to what do I awake? I might as well be in the 'Inferno' as here, in the upper air, with no purpose in my life; with hope and energy, and even the wish to do, eclipsed and paralyzed. Great heavens! what has happened to me? Can I be going mad?"

With such thoughts he slowly descended the hill in the direction of the lake, and, finding his boat where he had left it in the morning, embarked and made for home.

By the time he reached the middle of the lake the moon had risen, and was bathing the farther shore in light; and here, by some sudden impulse, he changed the direction of his boat, and steered straight for the Villa Bianca, which gleamed forth conspicuously from its dark background of wooded hill.

With eyes fixed on the villa, he crossed the lake in deep abstraction, so deep that he would have run his boat on the rocky promontory at the end of the villa garden, had not the overhanging rocks suddenly shut the house from his view, and thus aroused him. Then he ordered the boatman to stop. From this point nothing was visible to him in front but the miniature precipice which rounded off the peninsular domain lakeward. Over all the face of this, wild flowers grew in luxuriance, and on one white cluster, which broke the sky-line on the topmost ledge, and caught the moonlight, Cosmo fixed his eyes. Presently he was seized with a caprice—like the caprice of one in a dream—to possess himself of the flowers; and in a few seconds the rock was sealed, the prize was made, and he was turning to descend, when the sound of a guitar from the adjacent shrubbery arrested him. After a few tinkling notes of prelude, a voice began to sing. He had never heard Esmè's singing voice before, but at the first notes he knew that she was the singer. Every tone seemed to strike straight into his inmost heart, stirring it with intense vibrations, which sent through all his being a message of revelation. Her voice was full of pathos, and the song she sung—a pensive air to words of tender melancholy—broke the stillness of the hour with an effect that would have charmed any listener. As for Cosmo, he was spell-bound. Dimly conscious, at first, of the strangeness, even the impropriety, of his position, he could not move. As Ferdinand might not choose but follow Ariel's pilot-strain which called him to "these yellow sands," and led him to Miranda, even so was Cosmo bound to the spot where Esmè's voice enthralled him. The song was succeeded by another and another, and still he remained motionless, not reasoning at all, scarcely thinking, as it seemed—only receiving, as the thirsty ground drinks in the dew, an overwhelming sense of new and mysterious beatitude. At last the music ceased altogether; then there was a sound of footsteps, and in a moment the involuntary eavesdropper stood face to face with the fair singer. Esmè was somewhat startled at first by the apparition of a man standing on the ledge, as if he had suddenly risen from the lake; but, recognizing Cosmo, she recovered her self-possession at once, and said, gayly,

"Oh, Mr. Glencairn! I am relieved to find

you are only an earthly eavesdropper, after all. I feared it might be some outraged spirit of music risen from the lake to rebuke my discord, for I was singing very flat, I know."

Cosmo could say nothing.

"Pray," said Esmè, as he continued silent, "how did you come here?"

Cosmo roused himself with an effort, and said, "I must apologize for the intrusion, Miss Douglas; I assure you it was quite involuntary."

"Please don't suppose I am going to scold you as a trespasser. I only wished to know how you came here, for you certainly did not pass me."

"No, I came from the lake."

"From the lake?"

"Yes;" and then, with a desperate effort to appear unconscious and gay, he added, "You know the legend of the Lorelei, and how the music of the Lorelei drew all passers-by toward the rock where she sung? Well, the Rhine drama has been reproduced on Lake Como; only that I am more fortunate than my predecessors. I have escaped the 'Gewirre,' I have reached the top of the rock, and I am talking to the nymph!"

"I don't think you pay a compliment either to Lurline's music, or your own taste, though you can hardly expect me to feel flattered; but, seriously, you could not hear my voice from the lake?"

"Well, to speak truly, I must abandon the Lorelei myth. No, I did not hear your voice from the lake. I was rowing past here, and was seized with a strong desire to steal these wild flowers. I did steal them, as you see, and then I was going, but you began to sing. I hope you will forgive me for staying; I would have gone if I could, but it was impossible. You must forgive me, for it was your own fault."

"Forgive, Mr. Glencairn? It was very flattering of you to care to stay to hear my very humble performance. If I had known," she added, laughing—"if I had known that I had an audience, I would have tried to do better—that is, if I had not run away, which is more probable; but if I *had* stayed, I would certainly have chosen other songs—more cheerful ones."

"I am glad you didn't; I could have wished for nothing different. I shall never forget my stolen happiness. I could have wished for no other songs."

"But do you like sad songs, then?"

"To-night no others would have pleased me."

"I hope that does not mean that you are unhappy to-night?"

There was a strange agitation in Cosmo's manner, and Esmè let the words slip involuntarily, and had no sooner spoken than she repented of having done so.

"I cannot pretend to say that I am happy to-night, Miss Douglas," was the reply, uttered in a voice of the deepest gloom.

"I am very sorry. Has anything serious happened? Is some one ill? or—but forgive me, I am very rude; I have no right to question you."

"It is I who should ask forgiveness, and also correct myself. I cannot think that it would be possible to be unhappy in Miss Douglas's society; and if I have been unhappy all day, I have been more than happy since I landed on this enchant-

ed territory—enchanted truly, has it seemed to me," he added, as if thinking aloud.

"Ah, Mr. Glencairn! I shall really think you are mocking my poor music, if you pay it so many compliments."

"The music—the music! But was it only the music? was it—"

"I dare say the moonlight, and all the summer-night's delights, have had much more to do with the enchantment."

"All the summer-night's delights! all! so many, so many! I—"

"Where have you been to-day, Mr. Glencairn?" said Esmé, changing the subject abruptly, embarrassed by his strange manner, *distracted* air, and way of speech. "We saw Mr. Wyedale on the lake this evening, and he was full of serio-comic alarm at what he called your 'mysterious disappearance.'"

"I? Oh! I have been away beyond Lake Lecco."

"All day?"

"All day."

"And alone?"

"Yes, alone; I found my own society more than enough."

"Ah! you have quarrelled with yourself and not made it up, and that saddens you naturally."

"Perhaps that is what it is—it is very nearly true; but if I were to tell you exactly what has saddened me, you would certainly laugh at me."

"No, no; indeed, I am sure I should not."

"I will tell you, then," he said, breaking out with sudden energy. "I awoke yesterday and realized the fact that I was dreaming in a fool's paradise. I awoke yesterday to find that all my life has been little better than a sleep and a dream. I awoke yesterday and saw that I, who began life anxious for effort, full of aspirations, I, under pretext of preparation for life's work, am spending what ought to be my harvest-time in still sowing the seed and fancifully dressing the soil. Life is so short that, if we do not observe the proportions of its seasons and allot to each its work, life will be barren. It is not in winter that we make our harvests. I saw this clearly yesterday; to-day I see it still more clearly. I have had such awakenings before, and felt energy, impulse, eager desire, to begin a new course; but, to-day, energy and impulse are paralyzed. I fell asleep to-day in a wood, and dreamed I was in the first circle of the 'Inferno;' I awoke and felt that my waking life was worse than my dream. I seemed not only not to deserv the new way of life I had desired, but no longer to have any desire to find it. Is not this to be unhappy? to be truly miserable? To-night—now—I begin to know, to see things which— But, Miss Douglas, what egotism is all this! Pardon me. I have no right to inflict these confidences upon you—morbid fancies they must seem—remorseful groans of a moon-struck idler."

"No, no; believe me I am interested—though it is very sad. But now you have some new expedient, some new plan. Mr. Wyedale told me a great deal about you—about your travels; and I thought— But, well, I hope your new plan will be successful. I am quite certain that it will."

"Thanks, Miss Douglas; but I have no new

plan. I only see—no matter! Indeed, the only plan I have is to leave this to-morrow."

"To-morrow? that is a new intention, is it not?"

"Yes, it was formed to-night, not many minutes since. And now farewell. May I take these flowers? I had stolen them already, you will say; but I should like to take them with your permission."

"Surely they are not worth asking for?"

"I assure you I think they are."

"Then, as lady of the manor, I give them to you freely."

"I shall preserve them as a souvenir of to-night—and—and you. Good-bye."

"Is this a final 'good-bye?'"

"I am afraid it is."

"Perhaps you will be merciful to poor Mr. Wyedale and come to the Highlands, after all; if so, I hope you will be able to tell me that the new way is found, and the journey on it smooth and prosperous."

"If I have your good wishes, it is much."

"You have my best wishes. Good-bye."

"Farewell."

In that exquisite poem "Atalanta's Race," the hero, Milanion, after passing a night of prayer and vigil in the Temple of Aphrodite, is roused from the sleep which has at last overtaken him by an actual manifestation of the divinity before whose statue he has been pouring his supplications. In her glorious presence he sees naught "for dazzling light that round him shone."

"He staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odors breathed around,
For languid happiness he bowed his head."

And some such condition was Cosmo's, when, after a prelude of sweetest music, Esmé stood before him. She stood before him in a new light now. The revelation to his spirit was as complete and instantaneous as that to Milanion's eyes. He, too, had been prepared for an apocalypse by a vigil and an agony.

The time had come for him—as come it probably must for all, even the most intellectual—to discover that the aims, delights, and prizes of intellect are insufficient, and that, from another side of our nature, claims to have its share in our attention recognized are advanced with such a violence of impetuosity as to bear down, and cast into at least a temporary eclipse, the rival which till now had monopolized all our interest. And this? What is it? It is the demand which one nature makes for the interchange with another nature of something which the word "sympathy" but faintly expresses. It is the need to *give*, and to *receive*, an absolute devotion—so absolute that the two natures may become like the complementary parts of a single being, the disunion of which brings mortal anguish to both. As the soul of music slumbered in the shell till quickened by the breath of ethereal inspiration, so, deep in the recesses of our nature, lies this capacity of need to receive and to bestow, till, late or soon, the energizing influence reaches it with the sudden impulse of electricity, and it is roused, and we awake in the dawn of a new life. It is a dawn of fiery clouds and puzzling lights, and at first the spirit is only oppressed by a sense of bewilderment, or tortured by a vague, numb pain, the source of which is shrouded in

mystery. This is the dawn, the birth of love. The electric spark may spring from the witchery of a single glance, which has no witchery save only for one; from the music of a tone, which is mere dull sound for all the world besides; from a hundred things that may have fallen like passing sunbeams, leaving no impression on the many, but which are winged arrows of revelation and destiny to the devoted one.

There was no longer any mystery. Cosmo now saw the cause of his unrest. A long-cherished ideal, built on the slight foundation of a painter's graceful fancy, had passed from the world of phantasms, had come as a living woman, and captivated all his being. The revelation had been sudden, almost as if the work of magic; and all the strange mental phases of the last two days had been due to the overwhelming force of an emotion hitherto unfelt, and to the bewilderment of a mind seeking the cause of its trouble in every quarter save that whence it really came. Error on such a point may seem incredible; but the morbid watchfulness which Cosmo exercised over the growth of his intellectual life had developed a tendency to accessions of self-distrust and self-accusation, and to occasional recurrences of an almost despairing conviction that his life was destined to pass in laborious preparations only. This conviction—logical enough in view of Cosmo's system, which comprehended something like universal preparedness—always led to a feverish search for a way of escape into action. But, hitherto, the fever of search had exhausted itself, or been quieted by the fastidious verdict, that for that to which the search had conducted him he was not, as yet, "prepared." All his mental troubles being thus connected with this subject, and all accidental depressions taking this color, it was, after all, not wonderful that the first tumults of a great and unknown passion should fail to be recognized in their true character—a great and unknown passion, the force of which is often measured by the self-depreciation of its victims. But now they were recognized. Full on his mind and heart blazed the conviction of Esmè's infinite graces. In a few moments he seemed to see and to connect, one with another, every trait and feature of mind and body which, in three or four brief interviews, had passed under his observation. All seemed to him beautiful, harmonious, unusual, and complete. Sublimated by his imagination, her perfections matched—nay, they overpassed—those which, in his day-dreams, he had attributed to such a woman as the painter had delineated. Thus she fulfilled his dream and more; for she had a thousand other charms, all summed up in the one irrational, but *only* true, reason for loving—she was *herself*.

Are such things possible? it may be asked—such volcanic action in the minds of reasonable beings?—possible, above all, in the case of such a man as Cosmo seems to pretend to be? Yes, we reply; above all, in the case of such men as Cosmo. His heart had not been denuded by a series of transitory impressions, nor had the fineness of his sensibility and his perceptions been blunted by a sensual way of life. Fastidiousness had protected him from the former evil—purity, refinement, and, perhaps it must be owned, intellectualism, had held him from the latter; and so now this, the first real impression which woman

had ever made upon his heart and mind, addressed itself to capabilities which awoke, for the first time, with the freshness of youth and the vigor of manhood combined.

Cosmo had in truth, though unconsciously, been in the attitude attributed by a sweet singer to one waiting for his ideal, when he exclaims,

"Whenever she comes, she will find me ready
To do her homage, my queen! my queen!"

And now she had come; and the "longer" he had waited, the fuller and readier his homage.

The vigil was over, the preparation was complete, when Cosmo reached the summit of the rock, and at the first notes of Esmè's voice the revelation was made. She had come. At first the *pain* of love, which springs from the disproportion between longing and hope—the one infinite, the other so cramped by the exaggeration of obstacles—at first this pain was unfelt. He was in a trance of delight, in which pain was impossible. His untutored heart, smitten with a force which it could not control, answered promptly to the shock. Words of love and homage half rose to his lips, and longed for utterance. His secret would have betrayed itself to an expert before it had been many minutes consciously in his own possession; even to Esmè, perhaps, had not her perception of his strange manner led her instinctively to an abrupt change of subject, which recalled him sharply for the moment from the world of delicious dreams. Then, as by a lightning-flash, he beheld his position—its danger, its hopelessness, and, as an immediate consequence, the necessity for flight, as instantly announced.

But yet, again, as he went home over the bright waters, the glamour of dream-land fell upon him. For him, again, it was as though from amidst the confusions of a raving tempest one clear strain of ineffable music had arisen—a harmony of power that subdued to its own theme, and absorbed into itself, every other sound, steeping the soul of the listener in a sense of beauty and repose. The forms of external things were scarcely noted by him; but he saw that everything was good. His thought was of her alone; and the "light of the thought," playing upon all the world, clothed it in hues that belong to some better world than this.

Reveries such as these, consciously indulged in, hurry the dreamer, at lightning pace, along a path of spells and enchantments, at the end of which he is seized by a real power, and riveted in real fetters. Cosmo, again in the narrow solitude of his own chamber, fancied that he awoke before that point had been reached. Be that as it may, he completely recognized the situation into which he was drifting. He accented himself frankly, and admitted the impeachment with a sort of desperate calmness.

"I am falling in love," he said. "That which has befooled wiser and stronger men is beginning to throw its glamour over me;" and then the tenor of his thoughts was somewhat as follows: Was it fitting to surrender all one's faculties to the sway of one passion, however pure?—to let the destinies of life revolve round the will, perhaps the caprice, of one woman, however perfect? This sudden distaste for all other aims came as a timely warning. He must quell the infatuation. If he suffered it to grow, it would overmaster

him; and what then? Supposing he succumbed, following the dictates of inclination merely, what would be the result? The result was clear. He would be involved in a hopeless quest; his life would be ruined in pursuing a dream. Hopeless? Yes, indeed, strange things happen, but scarcely things so strange as this, that such a one should be attracted by a man like him. Even were it otherwise, there were a hundred other obstacles, all insuperable. Who was she, and what was her father's house? And who was he? Wealth on both sides was the one point in common. Then there were, on hers, illustrious lineage and ancient traditions—the sacreddest of heirlooms. Were such likely to be lightly transmitted to another race, whose lineage and traditions were represented by a blank—worse than an ignoble history?

No, it was hopeless; she was as far beyond his reach as the stars in heaven. But, now that he saw the madness, now that he knew the source of this fever that had been distracting his purposes, he must calmly set himself to root it out. He would not allow it to blind him, to distort the aspect of everything. He would turn it to his own purposes by escaping from it into action. Fortunately flight was in his power—instant flight. He would go away, no matter whither; he would go away from an influence which he felt might become irresistible. He would fight this madness upon even terms, and, conquering it, would find, as the reward of victory, the true way of life. In this brave manner did Reason declare war against Passion, speaking high and earnest words to assert a confidence perhaps not truly felt, and to drown the voice of the enemy. With a surplus of confidence truly, and a strong reserve of patience, must Reason enter on such a conflict.

Cosmo, awakened from his dream, and suddenly conscious of his danger, turned, at first, to the side which called him with this loud note of warning, and which offered him deliverance from evils to come.

Exhausted and bewildered, he submitted himself, and swore to follow Reason's dictates; but pain and heaviness were in his heart.

Poor victim! on this long day he had had many thoughts and many revelations. He had risen from the 'Inferno' to Paradise, and, falling thence, was now suffering the strong pangs of Purgatory.

We must now say a word or two about Esmè, who went from the moonlight interview both interested and puzzled. Even in her first interview with Cosmo she had found him to be different from any person she had met before—of graver thoughts and more refined interests than the people she ordinarily came in contact with; and, at the same time, with a certain self-restraint and calm, in his way of looking at things and discussing them, which relieved his conversation from the oppressiveness of dogmatism. Indeed, the modesty of his tone in advancing any view—even to her—was as marked as the refined gentleness and courtesy of his manner toward her.

All this could not fail to prepossess one capable, as she was, of appreciating it; and Tom Wyedale's revelations as to his friend's somewhat fantastic earnestness in the pursuit of culture had struck her imagination as—well, as something original and exalted. It cannot be denied that

she had been thinking a good deal about him all this evening, nor that she had, in fact, begun to place him upon a pedestal of calm and lofty intellectual purpose, at which serene altitude she was preparing to gaze with growing interest and admiration. Not a little puzzling, therefore, was it to find this statuesque hero immediately jumping from his pedestal, in the most human way, and pouring forth, in a burst of unconventional frankness, the passion of his self-contempt, and the despairing conviction that his life, so far from being heroic, was vacillating, little, and void. The incident was altogether astonishing. Had he come there to make *her* his *confidante*? If so, why? Or was their meeting altogether accidental? But still, if so, why was *she* the recipient of his confidence? It was almost incredible! But was it displeasing? No; such touches of nature make us more akin than statuesque heroism, on the one hand, and reverent contemplation thereof, on the other. This frank abandonment of reserve touched Esmè's sympathy, and roused that interest in the man himself, which she had before given to the rather cold abstraction—his intellectual earnestness.

But fear not, reader; she is not going to outrage your sense of the probable by blazing into a coincidence of impromptu love. We shall leave her, if you please, to her bewilderment and her interest for the present.

CHAPTER X.

COSMO GLENCAIRN, writhing in his mental purgatory, and physically exhausted—for a fast of fifteen hours, broken only by a crust of bread, is trying even to the powers of a novelist's hero—Cosmo Glencairn, thus suffering and prostrate, was not in the mood to receive with equanimity any further buffets from Fate. One, however, was in store for him; and it was delivered in the shape of a visit from his friend Tom Wyedale. That worthy, whose immense animal spirits obeyed with alacrity every animal influence, such as light, heat, food, drink, as well as the nervous exaltation of late hours and the friction of lively talk, was usually "about his best" when other people were thinking that the time for bed had well arrived. On this night, under a combination of pleasing stimulants, the Ravenhall bed-hour found him just in the humor to begin the evening. "Bed!" he exclaimed. "Bed at eleven o'clock? No, no; I'd sooner make another night of it with that devil of a Mr. Cass and his excruciating 'Bourbon.' But Cosmo must be home by this time. I'll go and draw him." Accordingly, in about a minute after, a tremendous rap at Cosmo's door roused that sad muser from his troubled thoughts, and Tom broke upon his solitude with the sudden garish effect of a hundred gas-jets simultaneously "turned on" in a dark room.

"Ha! ha!" he cried—"found at last! Ah, wanderer, what anxieties have been mine! Unravel the mystery; where have you been? and how? and why? Speak! son of the pale-faces; stare not with these unspeculative orbs! Unravel!"

"Oh, I've been trying an alternative—a day's solitude—"

"It don't seem to have been beneficial. Why, now I look at you, you *are* pale, with a vengeance, and—excuse my freedom—rather wild-looking. What's the matter, old man?"

"Matter? Well, I suppose I'm tired; in fact, I *am* tired—done up."

"Now here is a mystery. Nothing more to tell?"

"Nothing more."

"Delightful! the plot thickens! a veritable mystery! Who is she?"

"Who?"

"Why, the female person who must inevitably be connected with the fifteen hours' mysterious absence from his head-quarters of any man under, say forty—*senioribus debetur reverentia*, I suppose."

To Tom's surprise, his friend's countenance changed, as he said, hurriedly,

"There are exceptions, I suppose, even to such incontestable rules. I was away on the other side of Lake Lecco. I fell asleep, and slept for hours, in a wood. There was no Egeria there, however. I did not awake till it was dark, and—and here I am."

"Ah! yes, *that* I can see; but—well, you've had rather a meagre day, it seems. Apropos, have you dined?"

"No, I couldn't eat. I must turn in now, I think. What have you been about?"

"Oh, *my* day has been pregnant with events."

"Tell me about them in the morning, like a good fellow."

"Why not now?"

"Now I must sleep."

"I don't think the narrative will over-excite you; you will sleep immediately after it: I guarantee that as a minimum. My sister and Ravenhall arrived yesterday."

"Did they? Going to stay?"

"That depends. My sister is a woman of many wiles. I dined with them last night and to-night. I find she has come down here in pursuit of game."

"Yes? What sort of game?"

"The old game—an heiress for me!"

"Oh!"

"Yes, nothing discourages her. She was passing through Milan, of course 'by the merest accident in the world,' and, scenting a prey down here, hither she has come to drive it. She has already pledged me to co-operate; she has already spread her toils, and we have had a preliminary 'beat' this afternoon. Can you guess who the victim is?"

"I know no one here, except, of course, Miss Douglas, and—"

"Well, your knowledge is sufficient for the occasion. My sister proposes to annex Miss Douglas."

Cosmo started and winced; but Tom was engaged in rolling a cigarette, and did not notice his friend's emotion.

"To annex Miss Douglas," he continued; "with all her unquestioned advantages, actual and in reversion. What do you say to it?" he went on, as Cosmo continued silent, with compressed lips and clenched hands.

"Say to it?" was the reply. "Why, what *should* I say to it?"

"Approve?"

"You know I don't approve of fortune-hunting."

"Wish me well through it, at all events."

"No, I won't. I abominate this sort of thing. I can't stand hearing a lady spoken of in this way. Even as a joke, it disgusts me."

"Ah, my dear Cosmo, this is no joke; solemn earnest, I assure you—awful earnest! I don't like the business any more than you do, though my objections are otherwise founded. But, *que diable!* a man must live."

"Must he? Not necessarily by entrapping heiresses, however."

"Entrapping! What a word! You change the color of a transaction by choosing the wrong term. It is the '*suggestio falsi*.'"

"What of 'toils' and 'victims,' then, and the 'pursuit of game?'"

"Pshaw! figures of speech. If an heiress chooses to be captivated with me, that is her affair; and, indeed, since to be captivated is to be blessed, it is only kind to give her the chance of being captivated, and only fair to myself to let her see that captivation may take place on my side too."

"You don't *dare* to say that you think *Miss Douglas* is captivated with you?"

"No," said Tom, standing up to light his cigarette, and speaking between the puffs. "Alas! I wish I could; the (bother this cigarette!)—the struggle would be over, because, personally, I mean to capitulate at once. But give us both time—all three, I should say, for my sister is in the thick of it."

"I really beg that you will leave me now. You must know that this kind of language is offensive to me."

"Must I? Why? Not unless you're jealous; then I could understand; but that can't be, after what you said yesterday. You can't possibly be jealous, old boy?"

"Jealous? nonsense! But there's a right and a wrong way of talking about ladies, and yours is the wrong way. I have another motive, too, for asking you to leave me. I haven't told you, I believe, that I am going away to-morrow."

"Going away?—to-morrow?" said Tom, in a voice of consternation.

"To-morrow. To England."

"The devil!" cried Tom, the gloom of whose face now rivalled that of his friend's.

"Yes, and I must get to bed now."

"But why this sudden change of plans?"

"That does not matter; they *are* changed. I *am* going; so, good-night. I'll see you in the morning."

Tom was for the moment so utterly confounded that he said "Good-night" absently, and left the room; but scarcely had he reached the end of the corridor, when he halted with a look of desperation, and came back rapidly to his friend's apartment.

"I beg your pardon, old man," he said, putting his head in at his friend's door, "but do you *really* mean this?"

"Yes, yes, yes! '*I am going*' is plain English, is it not?"

"Well, yes; but I thought—"

"Now, what is it?"

"Don't be so fierce, old man. Well, it is this—that heathenish banker of mine—"

"Oh, hang it! How much do you want? Out with it at once. Here's my check-book. Now, how much? I'm dead tired!"

"Would two—yes, two-fifty, or say eighty, for three months, be—"

Before he had finished speaking, Cosmo was writing the check, and Tom had only had time to regret that he had not said "*Three-eighty*" when the check was handed to him.

"Ever so many thanks, old fellow," he said. "I'll be punctual. Three months. Let me see: we are now—hum—in May. Well, then—ah!—hum—June, July, August. August? ah! to be sure; exactly, all right," as if a sudden gleam of recollection revealed the probability of a pecuniary plethora in that month. "I hate," he added, "taking a loan without seeing my way; but August will suit admirably. Thanks, thanks! Good-night. Awfully sorry you're going!" and he was off.

"I would have given him double the money to be quit of him to-night," muttered Cosmo.

"What an ass I was not to say five hundred at once!" sighed Tom, as he went on his way.

He was able, however (with the tangible consolation of Cosmo's check in his pocket), to bear with fortitude the prospect of his friend's departure. He even admitted that it was now desirable. "For," said he, "if the fellow is going to get on such a very tall moral horse, and ride rough-shod over our new-born projects, Lucy will find it hard work to get me to stand up to the business like a man." He was inclined to think, however, that in the morning there would be another change, and that Cosmo would remain, after all. But in this he was mistaken.

The day proved bright and cloudless, but cool; and when Cosmo looked forth, all that paradise of land and water lay before his eyes in its most seductive aspects. It was very trying to leave such a scene, and in such circumstances. It cost a hard struggle to resist the appeal of external Nature, who urged him with all her fascinations to linger. Even on the snow-peaks far away the early light spread a soft and goodly bloom. The spirit of *dolce far niente* hovered over the lake and its shores. Everywhere there was "a rapture of repose;" but it was the repose of life, lulled and happy; for, now and then, some drowsy echoes of languid song came over the water, and now and then the mountain breeze passed, dreamily murmurous, through the groves, and gleaned the fragrance from their boughs, and bore it to the lake, which flashed into sunny ripples as it took the gift. A scene for happiness and love—requited love, dreaming its dream of perpetuity, with no jarring sound from the outer world to break the dear illusion.

"Beautiful! but not for me," said Cosmo aloud, as, after gazing for a few moments at the matchless prospect, he turned from the window, and set about his preparations for the journey. So that Tom was mistaken. His friend stuck to his resolution, and went; vouchsafing no further explanation of his movement, declining Tom's escort in the steamer as far as the town of Como, and leaving that worthy, though after a kindly farewell, in a state of deep mystification. "You can address to me at the — Club in London," said Cosmo; "and I suppose a letter to this place will find you, for some time." That was all. As the steamer carried him away, he never looked behind him. He turned his back upon

the Villa Bianca, and looked straight ahead, thus symbolizing that he abandoned love and dreams, and faced the future, cheerless and full of perplexity as it was.

CHAPTER XI.

In leaving Cadenabbia, Cosmo's plans were perfectly indefinite. He had suddenly decided "to go away"—and nothing more; and it would have been hard to say by what instinct (for it was scarcely with a conscious purpose) he took the route to London. But having fixed upon that destination, he pursued his journey with as much eagerness to reach its end as though called thither by imperious necessity.

It was a beautiful morning when he reached London; and, as the forenoon wore on, he beheld from his windows in Piccadilly the stream of well-dressed loungers, on horse and foot, setting steadily toward the Park.

Beginning to feel a reaction from the excitement of rapid travel, and unfit, in fact, for anything else, he dressed and soon found himself floating with the stream to Rotten Row. It was a year since he had been there, and he felt strangely bewildered, thus dropping from the lotus-eater's paradise of Como into the wondrous congregation which performs the liturgy of "morning Park;" wonderful indeed, with its *coup d'œil* of beauty, movement, color, contrast, and variety, all set in the tender frame of leaves and blossoms. He moved on absently, amidst the strangely bracketed incongruities which Fashion, with unconscious wit, here parades so lavishly. Now and then a voice broke from the level hum and hailed him. Now and then a fair equestrian swooped to him, in a gracious bow, as she cantered past. Now and then an acquaintance stopped to ask him a hurried question, or to tell him some new thing in a frugal whisper.

No one was surprised to see him: all greeted him as if one seen yesterday. Naturally: but to-day this puzzled him. A decade seemed to have elapsed since his last visit to the Park. These faces and voices seemed to belong to some half-forgotten period. He had run away from the world of dreams; and here, in the heart of the world of reality, he seemed to gaze upon a phantasmagoria.

He went on to where the path branches up to the Serpentine, and he followed it. Presently he came upon a young man dressed in attire which had once been fashionable, but which was now dismally faded and frayed. Cosmo recognized in him, and with surprise, one of his oldest friends, and the son, moreover, of a deceased friend of his father. The young man was standing in rapt contemplation of a collie dog and a swan, who were having a "difficulty" with each other, by land and water—the dog in exasperating fun, the swan furious.

"Ah, my dear Cosmo!" he cried, "delighted to see you again! You've— But wait a bit! Just look! Swan scores now to a moral! No, he don't. Bravo, collie! Now, swan! By George! a nasty one that for the dog! Thrown up the sponge—the cur! How are you, Cosmo? Look seedy. Been to Mount Ararat, picking up chips of the ark, or where? I haven't seen you for an age."

"No, I've been in Italy for a good while. But you, Phil! what on earth has happened to you?"

"I? Oh!— There now; just look at that beast of a swan!—bullying the ducks next. Never saw such a fiend as that bird is, when you once get his back up."

"You seem to be intimate with his habits."

"I believe you, and with some reason. They're my only amusement now, these birds—my only resource."

"Why, what has happened to you?"

"Happened to me? Look at me. I'm cleaned out, that's all. Listen to the *précis*. Spanish bonds. Twenty thousand pounds. Used to give me eighteen hundred a year. To-day, nothing—a duck's egg, and *that* not eatable."

"But what has that to do with the birds?"

"Everything. Look at my clothes. Can I show in such things down there? Can I mingle with the world thus? The world has distinctly said 'No.' Every one has shunted me. My *quondam* fair friends have the sun in their eyes when we meet. No one was ever so exhaustively cut by everybody. I suppose I look as if I wanted to borrow money. I don't, however. But thus wags the world. Well, you see, they don't *quite* drive me out of the Park. I'm still here, for my hours of recreation, ha! ha! But it's no fun being cut every two minutes; and, besides, my clothes are really too scandalous; so I hang about up here a good deal, commanding a view, with one eye, of the Row, my ancient friends, and former way of life, and observing, with the other, the habits of these birds—who, to do them justice, are really good fun, if you give your mind to them. My right eye and my left compare notes; and fine philosophizings and withering sarcasms are evolved beneath this seedy tile. But to think that eighteen months ago I was down there in the 'Ride,' well mounted, fed, dressed, liked—and now these paltry water-fowl for all my pals! The pity of it, Cosmo!—the pity of it!"

"Why, Phil, you talk like an imbecile! Do you expect to mend matters by idling here? Why don't you do something? Why don't you take the remnant of your money and go and work with it in a new sphere—a colony—anywhere out of this?"

"Easy to say 'work' and 'remnant.' Produce the 'work' and the 'remnant,' and I'll do the one and use the other—if I can. I'm sick of this life. Not a club to my name now; can't stand the ready money. Tick at a cheap restaurant; garret in Soho; about a hundred pounds left of all I had; that sum owed over and over again to divers suckers of blood. That's the situation; and a pretty grisly one I find it, Cosmo, my friend."

"I remember that, after my father's death, I went to your father, and asked him about an investment for my twenty thousand pounds. He advised me to put it into a business, and go in with it myself, and work and make a fortune. I reminded him that my own father had begun life with the same capital, and, after working hard all his life, and making half a million, lost it all one fine morning, and was only able to leave his nest-egg to me because it had been settled on my mother. 'Well,' said your father, 'you can't

afford to be idle on the *legitimate* interest of twenty thousand pounds.' 'No,' I said; 'but as my father was ruined by legitimate business and work, I think I'll try what can be done with illegitimate interest and idleness. It's a toss-up between the two as to safety, I fancy. Can you put me up to some nice, illegitimate thing, at about twenty per cent.?' Then your governor flared up, and sent me about my business. Well, I know better now. I wish I had the chance again of taking his advice."

"After all, Phil," said Cosmo, "we both want the same thing. We both want work."

"Why on earth do you wish to work?"

"To satisfy myself; and since, to obtain the end, you *must* work, we are in the same boat."

"Remember, however, that you are a cabin passenger, and that I am in the fore-castle."

"Well, we're both sailing in search of the same port, and the more or less comforts of the voyage don't matter much."

"Don't they? Exchange berths with me, and I'll cruise about, *sine die*, without bothering about the port at all."

"You take a low view of things, Phil."

"So, perhaps, would you, if you were hungry, and ill lodged, and ill clad, and then cut by all the world, whereas I once had troops of friends; yet, I am sure, I never did any fellow any harm—not willingly, at least."

"Dear old Phil! I'm sure you never did. I'm very sorry for you—more than very sorry. What can I do for you?"

"I don't know, Cosmo. You know I won't borrow money; besides, it wouldn't be borrowing now. So what you *may* do, if you can, is, I suppose, to find me some employment."

"I wish I could, Phil; but there is nothing so hard to find as employment for a man not specially trained to anything."

"Ah, yes; but my views are limited now. With all my heart, and thankfully, I will tackle to anything, and take what I can get. I know the difficulties of getting that 'something' to do, which ruined men, brought up to do nothing, are always hunting for. I've exhausted every method: answered scores of advertisements—even reached that deepest depth of replying (with enclosure of fourteen stamps) to one which offered 'gentlemanly employment—not involving serious distraction from other work—at five pounds a week.' I've reached, perhaps, even a deeper depth than that. I offered myself as advertising poet to Blogg, the cheap shirt-maker! I wrote, at his request, a sample of my powers, in celebration of his 'Obconic Shirt'—and was rejected. I, Philip Denwick, who was *proxime accessit* for the chancellor's medal at Cambridge, was found unworthy to hymn the huckstering invention of a man named Blogg! Look here; here are the verses. Read them, and say if Blogg is not a monster of obtuseness."

He took a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to Cosmo, who read as follows:

"BUY BLOGG'S OBCONIC SHIRT AT 3s. 9d.

"Obconic! Obconic; thy magical name
Electrified London, in letters of flame;
For 'Sandwich' battalions swept slow through the
streets,
With the awful *aplomb* of police on their beats,
Displaying on boards, borne like banners in line,
The legend 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine.'"

"I went by the river, I came by the Strand;
Around me, above me—by water and land,
From pier and from boarding, from 'bus, boat, and
wall,
The genius of Blogg spoke its gospel to all:
But the people were puzzled, and failed to divine
What it meant—this 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-
and-nine.'

"Time passed! 'Twas the leafiest moment of June,
And the hands on the clock of High Fashion mark-
ed noon.
When shadily placed in Hyde Park, by the 'Ride,'
I watched, flowing by, the equestrian tide—
Full and smooth as the flood of exuberant Rhine,
Or thy bosom 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-
nine.'

"'Anonyma' passed on her high-stepping mare,
Lady this and Lord that and Sir 't'other were there,
And Rumor asserted the Prince was at hand,
And loud clashed, from Knightsbridge, the cavalry
band;
But none to mere pleasure their hearts could resign,
For the thought of 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-
nine.'

"Oh, languid's the stare, it is said, of *haut ton*!
And it seldom looks hard at one object, or long;
But modish restraints were cast wildly aside,
When sudden appeared in the midst of the 'Ride,'
A youth, who all others in grace did outshine:
'Twas thy 'showman,' 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-
and-nine.'

"Swift reined in their jennets fell beries of belles,
Slow backward in dudgeon fell armies of swells—
Admiration and envy shot fire from each eye,
As the noble young *gaillard* rode haughtily by;
Ay! well might his bosom swell high, I opine,
For it swelled 'neath 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-
and-nine.'

"Lightly curvetting, he passed up the 'Ride,'
And Fashion, at first, stood agape on each side;
But soon rose a shout, 'mid the champing of bits,
'This *must* be "Obconic!" Just see how it fits!
'You are right,' cried the youth, as he bowed down
the line;
'You behold the "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-
nine."

"Swiftly he turned him, and passed to the street,
Galloped behind him a glittering suite;
Racing and chasing up Piccadillee,
Went nobles and gentles—a wonder to see—
Racing and chasing, for none wished to dine
Till supplied with 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-
nine.'

"The clubs of St. James's, the clubs of Pall Mall,
Sent the flower of their youth the procession to
swell,
And when it had come to that warehouse of Blogg's,
A thousand young nobles, in the noblest of togs,
Rushed in, and exclaimed, as though maddened with
wine,
'Give us all the "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-
nine."

"It was done; and the pick of the nobility
Went scampering homeward in pride and in glee:
And from that day to this he who longs for success—
For the senate's applause, or the maiden's caress—
Never needs to despond, or his dear hopes resign,
While he sports the 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-
and-nine.'

Cosmo gave him back the paper, laughing
heartily at the quaint earnestness of his friend's
expression in contrast with the preposterous ab-
surdity of the verses.

"I think," he said, "Mr. Blogg must be rather fastidious."

"The villain had the audacity to say that he didn't think my vein was 'hepic' enough for his line of business: but it's just my luck all over; nothing will ever turn up trumps for me."

"Don't say that, Phil. I'll think it over, and see what can be done. Meantime, dine with me

to-night at 'The Gastronomic,' and we'll talk it over: eight o'clock."

"All right; but in that case I must go and give warning at the restaurant, or they'll nail me for the daily 'regulation.' *Au revoir!*"

"Money! money! money!" mused Cosmo, as he strolled along; "half my friends seem to have no other cry on their lips or wish in their hearts. It is their *summum bonum*. If they got their wish, I wonder how many of them would be happier than they are. It seems to do nothing for me in that way. I doubt if even Tom Wyedale would be happier. Without all that intriguing against his banker and friends which represents his mental activity at present, he would find life flat. Poor Phil's case is different. Actually pinched for the common necessities of life! That is horrible! Then he is willing to work, and unwilling to borrow. I doubt if anything would bring Tom to that. I can conceive no circumstances under which Tom would not have fine clothes and good dinners. Poor Phil is of a different stamp; has good brains, and is a manly fellow in his way; and these misfortunes, with work to follow—lots of work—might make a man of him. He is not steeped to the chin in pleasure and selfishness, like Tom."

"After all, perhaps, these *are* lucky fellows whose *summum bonum* is money—for that, at least, is attainable; while mine is what I must not even think of. Let me be honest with myself, and admit it. Let me be true to myself, and find a substitute for it. A substitute! well, at least an anodyne. Work is the only anodyne. Enough of myself; let me think of Phil. Something *must* be done for him. Surely my father might find something for him—the son of his old friend—at my intercession. Yes, I think so; I will try. By-the-bye, what an age it is since I saw my father! I must write and tell him of my return, or go down and see him: that will be best. I will go down at once—to-morrow. I will try to forget myself, and think only of Phil, till I have set him on his feet again."

CHAPTER XII.

"Ah! bravo, Phil! punctual to the moment!" cried Cosmo, as his guest entered the hall of the club.

"Hunger is the best horologe, my friend—a new aphorism—nearly all my own."

"Bring it into the dining-room, then. Dinner is ready."

"Oh, this is a sensation I did not expect to experience again! Two years since I ate my last dinner here—then, alas! a member. I say" (pausing in the hall), "how about my garments? All right?"

"Perfectly."

"We don't dress at our ordinary—that gives the evening things a chance. There's a fungussy sort of a smell about them, though, I fear: notice it?"

"Not a bit. Come on."

"By George! what a lot of fellows! This your table? Thank goodness! I shouldn't like to run the gantlet of the whole room. But, after all, I've done nothing to be ashamed of. Cour-

age, Philip Denwick! Courage, *mon brave*! Oh, you Amphitryon! Oysters and chablis! The price of three days' dinners in the mollusks, and in the wine—"

"Bad manners, Phil, to appraise the dinner."

"Ah, to be sure; they are exotics culled in Leicester Square. But, after six oysters and a glass of chablis, my retransformation will be complete."

"Poor old Phil!" said Cosmo, "I'm awfully glad to see you. By-the-bye, I have an idea that I shall manage to get something for you through my father. I think we shall make it all right. So, meantime, eat, drink, and be merry."

"Ah, Cosmo, why are you so kind to me? I don't deserve it; I'm a worthless fellow. Why, you're actually been thinking and scheming about me since we met—the only fellow who has given me a thought—"

"Tut, man! it is only common friendship. Don't gush about it."

"No, I won't gush; but it isn't 'common friendship.' Common friendship (*experto crede*) has the sun in his eyes, or is morbidly interested in the pavement, when he meets an old pal in a rusty coat. All those fellows down there—I know a dozen of them—are 'common friendship.' They passed by on the other side. If I had been a thief it would have been different; but I only fell among thieves; and you are the only good Samaritan."

"Now, Phil, shut up!"

"Well, I will; but admit that you are pouring into my wounds oil—"

"No more of it!"

"Not to say, oysters and chablis, and those other benefits to come with which gratitude is so much concerned," added Phil, turning off in a joke the emotion which kindness, long strange to him, really awakened. "Yet," he continued—

"Yet to that golden heart of thine,
I'll pledge this blossom of the golden wine."

On second thoughts, I won't; I'll await the champagne, which I perceive to be in ambush; for the poet's 'blossom' must clearly mean the *mousse* of that delicious intoxicant. Let us be exact."

"I say, Phil," said Cosmo, "how do you get on for society? Solitude to a gregarious man like you must be a real affliction."

"Society? I have none; except, of course, at my dinner-hour, in the modest restaurant close by Leicester Square."

"And what is that?"

"Mixed, rather; all foreign, but of all nationalities. We are couriers, most of us; but some of us are *commis-voyageurs*, refugees—spies, I suppose—and such like. We're a funny lot."

"How on earth did you drop into it?"

"I dropped into it because the drop into foreign low life did not seem so deep as the drop into the home equivalent; besides, I don't believe there can be an English establishment of the sort, with anything like the same low rate of charges."

"Do you fraternize with your messmates?"

"Rather! Couldn't be avoided—at meals."

"And what are you supposed to be?"

"Oh, they decided that somehow for themselves—an artist! And the theory has developed, so that I am now an unappreciated genius, with

a great but unfinished work in my *atelier*, which one day will, etc., etc. At first I thought of being a 'nobleman in disguise,' but it struck me the disguise would become exaggerated as Time and my wardrobe fought it out to the bitter end. Besides, I should have been too much above my company. You see, we have no men of title among us, except, perhaps, a *chevalier d'industrie* or two, and they are too retiring to parade their distinction."

"Don't they hang on to you, apart from the dinner-hour?"

"No, I manage to choke them off. Their society at dinner is quite enough. Their manners are not too nice, nor is their converse edifying. There is fine free talking, I can tell you, among the couriers. I get some startling new views of some of my old friends—their employers. They have eyes, these fellows; certainly they have tongues. Well, it is to be hoped they seldom speak the truth. In any case, no one is sacred. They spare neither sex nor age. Apropos, you ought to hear the beasts bragging of their conquests. It makes one's blood curdle when it doesn't make one laugh. There was a row at dinner among the lady-killers yesterday, which was rich. It began in this sort of way, between a Russian and a Frenchman—awful scoundrels both.

"*Figurez vous!*' quoth Antoine, the French villain—'*figurez vous!* Je viens de voir cette adorable Laydee Mayree, au parc, ce matin!'

"*Bien! bien!*" growls Ivan, the Russ, who rather thinks he ought to have a monopoly of the Lotharious business.

"*Elle m'aime à la folie! c'est sûr,*' cries Antoine.

"*Vous le croyez?*"

"*Si je le crois! quand nous nous rencontrons elle me fait comprendre tous ses sentiments, par un tout petit clignement d'œil.*"

"*Et cela veut dire?*"

"*Cela dit, 'Antoine! adorable Antoine! décidez vous à vous déclarer franchement. Moi, je suis jeune, riche, belle, noble; cependant je suis tout à vous. Avancez, donc! Demandez! vous y gagnerez!'*"

"*'Il paraît,' says Ivan, 'que ce diable de clignement d'œil vaut bien des paroles! Mais pourquoi ne pas s'avancer?'*"

"*'Ha! il y en a bien d'autres qui— Écoutez—'*"

"*'Uh! uh! uh! uh! bah!'* roars Ivan; '*laissez moi parler. Vous connaissez la Comtesse de—?'*"

"*'Je l'ai vue; c'est une belle petite veuve qui va se marier avec Scer Jams Thormson.'*"

"*'Ce n'est pas vrai.'*"

"*'Qui vous a dit le contraire?'*"

"*'La Comtesse elle-même—hier au soir—par un petit hochement d'épaules.'*"

"*'Ce qui explique?'*"

"*'Ce qui dit, 'Ivan! ne croyez pas leurs détestables mensonges! Je n'ai de place dans mon cœur que pour vous! Scer Jams n'est rien pour moi!'*"

"*'C'est un hochement qui s'exprime tout nettement! Écoutez! La Laydee Mayree—'*"

"*'Uh! uh! uh! uh! bah!'*"

"*'Est-ce que c'est un ours qui parle? ou bien un porc?'* cries Antoine, in a fury. Here a heavy German misercant, Fritz, explained to me

confidentially, but aloud, 'Mees Fannee Baykair ees een loff wees me. Himmel! aw-fool-lee een loff.' The others turned like tigers on the outsider who was violating their special territory. 'Amoureuse de toi!' they cried. 'Amoureuse de toi! avec ta figure de cochon!' Then there was a row, and they all fought in a bunch. Ah, Cosmo, you may laugh! but to sit at meat with ruffians of that sort is not the least of trials. When I think of them, I say, 'What is there in the way of work that I would not undertake, if thereby I might escape?'

"Your old aversion to work has evaporated?"

"Perforce it is clean gone. I long for work."

"Stick to that, Phil, and we'll pull you through. You're fortunate, I dare say, to be beyond the reach of fastidiousness."

"Fastidiousness! Why, if I hadn't come across you, I believe that, in a very few days, I would have taken a regular header, and separated myself, once for all, from my old grade—become a 'workingman.'"

"Couldn't you have become a reporter for the press, or even a writer?"

"I dare say I could, if they would have had me, which they wouldn't. My antecedents were not in my favor, and I had no one to back me, so everything was barred. I went to Sherville, the under-secretary, you know, who really has some influence, and used to be a great friend of mine. I asked him if he couldn't put me up to something of the sort. He was very civil, and said he 'would see,' and let me know. He didn't let me know, and now he can't even see me. I suppose he's ashamed of having forgotten all about it, and so falls back on cutting me. Stupid of him! Aha! here comes Flintshire. Now, what will he do? He has ignored me steadily ever since 'the fall.' He can't pass *you*. Come, I enjoy this. Yes, thanks, another glass of champagne."

Up came the noble lord alluded to, and stopped to greet Glencairn effusively, who returned his salutations, and then said,

"Surely you and Denwick know each other?"

Whereupon his lordship screwed his glass very tight into his eye, stepped back, gazed earnestly at Phil, then thrust a right cordial arm across the table, and exclaimed,

"Why, bless me! it *is* Denwick! Bless me, so it is! Who *would* have expected to see you? And how are *you*? Don't know *when* I've seen you. Been to the-er 'Catacombs,' haven't you?"

"Well, I've been a good deal in that line of country."

"So some one said—Pyramids or 'Catacombs'—forget which; and how are *you*?"

"Well, I feel a little mouldy after the 'Catacombs.'"

"Mouhdy! Ha! ha! ha! So like *him*, eh? Not half a bad place, though, I suppose? Lots of shooting and that—Egypt-er. Well, my time's up," and off he went.

"What does the ass mean by the 'Catacombs'? I don't suppose he knows what he means; but he *does* know that he's seen me half a dozen times in the last month. Oh, here comes little Peter Wellborough: him will I accost."

Up came Peter, crying gayly, "Just come to town, you two foreigners of distinction? Couldn't have the appetite for a *menu* like this if you had been here a week."

"Why do you cut me nowadays, Peter?" asked Phil, in whose veins the champagne was beginning to "make summer."

"Cut you?" (rather abashed)—"*I cut you?*"

"Distinctly, dead."

"Oh, come now, that's turning the tables on a fellow with a vengeance! Here's a fellow, Glencairn, who disguises himself, and prowls about in shady places dressed beyond recognition, never comes to his clubs, avoids every one, and then says he's cut! Why, of course, every one thinks he has a game—amateur detective—mysterious intrigue—what not, and humors him. *I'm* too discreet to thrust myself on a fellow when I see he has a game—that I am. But if he *hasn't* a game, he ought to tell us. I was just saying so to Bamboro."

"What were you just saying to Bamboro?" asked the individual in question; an overateen, insolent-looking man who now joined them.

"About Denwick, you know."

"What of him?"

"Says *we* cut him."

"Does he? Well, *I* do; he's right, so far as I am concerned."

"Why do you cut me, Bamboro?" asked Phil.

"Because you look such a sweep."

"That's frank enough, at all events."

"Why do you wear such infernal old clothes, then?"

"Because I'm ruined—that's why; got no money to pay for new ones."

"'Ruined!' 'pay!'—what words! My poor fellow, no amount of misfortune can excuse the use of such coarse expressions. Why, most of us are 'ruined,' as you call it. You can't be worse than *I* am; but it don't interfere with my comfort much, or with my clothes at all. It *does* prevent me knowing fellows who get themselves up like rat-catchers, however. My tailor wouldn't like it, you see; and he is entitled to a voice in such a matter. But I'm glad to see you're clean again; for, after all, I never cut *you*—I only cut *your* clothes."

"Rather a nice distinction."

"Well, so it is; it is quite true that a man and his clothes are pretty much the same thing—but you know what I mean. How's that 'Chateaubriand'?" wistfully eying a *plat*. "Looks wonderful—must try to remember it to-morrow. You ought to drink one glass of a generous burgundy after it—it deserves the compliment. Not champagne! No, no, my dear Phil Denwick, NOT CHAMPAGNE!" and he almost interfered violently to prevent the profane draught. "Well, I must leave such heathens. Off to the opera, and awfully late."

"Humbugs and ruffians!" said Phil, when they were again alone—"that's the division which my Serpentine philosophy makes of mankind."

"The sweetening of your philosophy does not seem to have been among the uses of adversity. The Bamboro system is not so gloomy; it merely divides mankind into pegs for new clothes and pegs for old ones."

"Bamboro is a complete ruffian."

"And he seems to think that you and 'old clothes' are pretty nearly interchangeable terms; so each of you falls within the other's division. Seriously, Phil, it astonishes me to see you taking all this cutting, dropping, ignoring—or what-

ever you call it—so much to heart. What can it matter?"

"Try it for eighteen months, and you'll see what it matters."

"Well, but if every one is either a humbug or a ruffian, it can be no great hardship to you (the exceptional unit, I presume?) to lose such society."

"One didn't know what the society was till it was tried. But, besides all that, if a man can get nothing to do—if he is forced to be idle and solitary—he necessarily lives much in his own thoughts, which, under the circumstances, are, rightly or wrongly, certain to be bitter. I think mine are righteously so."

"You used not to be selfish, Phil; but this is the very acme of selfishness. You judge all your old friends, *en bloc*, simply from your own point of view. You fasten motives on them that may not be theirs in reality. Many of them very possibly think it kinder to you to drop a surface acquaintanceship, which can bring you neither pleasure nor advantage, but really the reverse."

"Ah, they should leave me to judge of that. However, I won't defend myself. But remember, as extenuating circumstances, that I have been grazing for eighteen months among black sheep in Leicester Square, and that the touch of pitch defiles. Then let by-gones be by-gones. If I were only out of sight of all these fellows and the old life, and at work, somewhere, somehow, I promise you I wouldn't waste a thought on Bamboe & Co. — selfish or humane: as to philosophizing about them, pah! I'd none of it."

"Work, Phil! yes, that is the grand panacea for all evils."

"Even on the homœopathic principle—*similia similibus*—I welcome it."

"It kills morbid thoughts, and cheats the devil."

"I'm sick of the devil, and would gladly thwart him."

"It will distract you from selfishness."

"By satisfying the wants of 'self.'"

"It will give you a healthier tone about your brother-men."

"By leaving me no leisure to observe their characteristics."

"It will teach you self-reliance."

"Having already learned that vain is the help of other men."

"You are incorrigible, Phil, and sadly deteriorated."

"Ah, Cosmo, I'm only joking! But mind you, old fellow, it is pretty easy to be philanthropic when all the race of man smiles on you. I don't think it can be very hard to give good for good. It is scarcely meritorious to be open-handed, when one's hands are too full to close; or to be interested about others' needs, when one has no necessities of one's own! There is a Johnsonian sentence for you, to illustrate the vanity of well-to-do virtue and unselfishness. Why, my dear old boy, I might hoist you with your own petard, and prove even *you* selfish for looking at me only from your own point of view! Ah! well, well, we're passing into the champagne stage of ethics. Apropos, pass that king of wine, and I'll propose a toast to 'Honest Industry.' Drink to it, mine host!"

The champagne, and the reaction from solitude and desperation, sent poor Phil's spirits up to

the pitch of hilarity for a while; and, in ebbs and flows of grave and gay, the conversation went on, and the evening passed. When the friends separated, it continued a settled point that Cosmo should go down to his father the next day, and do what he could for Phil. What the something to be done, or got, for him, remained quite vague and indefinite. Phil was himself indifferent to the nature of the employment he might get.

"I feel," he said, "at this moment—thus warmed with the good wine—equal to anything. I feel denced like Longfellow's 'Village Blacksmith.' I mean to make *him* my model. 'The sinews of my brawny arms shall be like strong and iron bands.' Good-night, Cosmo. You'll give me the earliest intelligence of a 'career,' won't you? I long to begin it" (singing)—

"Each morning sees some work begun,
Each evening sees its close."

Great fellow the smith! I always liked him!" and so Phil went off to his garret with a heart lighter than it had been for many a long day, and Cosmo to his luxurious chambers musing upon many things.

When Love has once "ventured in," it is difficult for the strongest nature to expel it by mere force of will, and altogether impossible to do so summarily. It is easy to say "I will stamp it out;" but it rises from the process: cast out for a moment, it steals back into the consciousness wrapped in mists of subtle reverie, and, regaining its lost vantage-ground, again boldly confronts its antagonist. Thus, alas! it befell with the heroic Cosmo, who, though, fortified by an evening spent "out of himself," he resisted, when first left alone, the clamorous intruder, resisted not for very long. He turned himself to Phil's affairs, and the means of extricating him from his troubles. He sketched out one or two little schemes, which he thought of submitting to his father, on his friend's behalf; and, as long as he thus devoted his attention, he did well. But presently, on recalling the conversation of the evening, he began to feel that he had lectured his friend in a pharisaical way about selfishness; and some echoes of the high moralities he had indulged in came back to him with the true ring of Eliphaz the Temanite, and his brethren in consolation. Then, reverting to some random remarks of Phil's on the nature of well-to-do unselfishness, it dawned upon him that there was a very large beam in his own eye, and, by pretty easy stages, he arrived at the cheerful conclusion (in his ordinary style) that the principle which regulated his own life was one of simple egotism. Once back to the subject of self, his faults, failures, etc., a subtle subcurrent flowed into his mind, bringing with it, among other suggested antidotes for egotism, the thought that a life might be happily rescued from selfishness by devotion to *another* life, whose beauty and nobility should be contagious, by union with *another* nature, mere contact with which should inspire lofty motives and instigate purely generous actions. And thus beguiled, Cosmo floated unconsciously away back to the Lake of Como, to the pathetic moonlight, and the whispering groves and listening waters—to her who, amidst all that goodliness, had revealed herself to him as the mistress of his heart.

For hours he sat plunged in this narcotic reverie; on, through the silent hours, incapable of effort to throw it off. The voices of the night were hushed, and everything was still; but ever upon the ear of Cosmo's fancy *one* soft wave of distant music seemed to beat its sweet refrain. Out in the summer night nothing was visible save the dim outlines of dewy trees; but ever before Cosmo's eyes *one* vision seemed to pass, and return, and pass again incessantly, moving with a thousand remembered charms of movement, bright with the magic of remembered smiles. Love ruled the hour, and used his opportunities; and though his captive struggled not, he tightened all his bonds. Resolution whispered remonstrance, and Cosmo cried, "Why should I die, without one effort for life? Without *her*, life will be death in life." Despair muttered, "Lost!" and Cosmo cried, "I despaired too soon." Then Despair and Resolution fled; and Hope returned and gave the battle to the strong—and strong Love ruled the hour!

That is to say, in mere English, that, through much confusion, Cosmo reached, at the end, one clear idea and one clear purpose, and these were (sparing the reader a journey through the tortuous avenues by which he arrived at them) as follows: that he had despaired and fled prematurely, and on uncertain grounds; that these grounds were, mainly, the belief or the suspicion, or something between the two, that there rested on his origin some stigma which must make his suit hopeless; that this belief was founded on his father's silence as to their origin, which silence had been explained long ago by a maternal uncle to mean that they *had* no history, or, rather, that the brief history which they had was disgraceful, and would not bear investigation, or even talking about. But his father was intensely reserved on all subjects; and his uncle's views on the subject of pedigree were hyperbolic; besides which there had never been any familiar intercourse between the father and the uncle. Perhaps, then, the stigma might be—nothing altogether insuperable. So thought Cosmo, to-night, in the exaltation of his love; and his resolution was that the visit to his father, decided on for to-morrow, should, besides the regulation of Phil's fortunes, have another purpose very paramount to that.

"I have been hasty and impulsive," Cosmo said to himself; "I dare say it was owing to the wild tumult and agitation I fell into *out there*. Well, now, at least, while there is a vestige of hope, I will not give it up. It may be infinitesimal, perhaps, but I will not abandon it till I am forced to do so by clear evidence. I have not kept to my resolve? No, I have not. Love is stronger than I thought, or I am weaker. 'Weakness?' Is this 'weakness?' It may be; it may be weakness to cling to life; and she is my life. To-morrow I will ask my father for a frank statement of the truth."

And so Cosmo at last went to bed with a hazy notion (as a sort of *P.S.*) that Phil was a providential dispensation, and that but for him the appeal to his father might not have suggested itself. But with this view those only will coincide who believed that, when he sailed away from Cadenabbia, he really "turned his back on love and dreams" forever.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next afternoon saw Cosmo arrive at his father's abode. It lay at the distance of half a day's journey from London, in a solitary district, on the outskirts of an ancient forest, within sight of the sea. The house was old, Gothic, and of imposing dimensions; its *entourage* of wooded park was unenclosed, and gradually lost itself in a heathery wilderness, which rose into uplands behind the house, and in front sloped down till it touched the sandy margin of the sea. With some dignity, the place had yet a gloomy, sorrow-stricken aspect; for there was scarcely a trace of human life visible in the far-spreading wolds, and the dark hues of pine-woods saddened the summer light about the house, and deepened the gloom of winter. Altogether, in its sombre silence, the place seemed to mourn the fallen fortunes of its lord—an impoverished nobleman, from whom Mr. Glencairn rented Edlisfort Castle on a long lease; and no one approaching the house could have failed to ask, "What kind of man can care to bury himself here, voluntarily, out of the world, among desert wilds by a melancholy sea, in an old castle looking like the very tomb of hope?" And one would unquestionably have expected to hear of a romantic character—a grand melodramatic fellow, with a history and a broken heart, probably. But no mysterious romance attached itself to Mr. Glencairn. His social needs were few, and such society as he desired he imported, and entertained with large hospitality. He believed in HIMSELF, in Truth, in Energy, in the adroit use of opportunity, and in Ozone. He had been practically faithful to his creed, and with these results. In the iron trade he had become a millionaire, and, availing himself of an opportunity of the epoch, he had sold his business, with its grand prestige, to a company formed to conduct it. Freed thus from absorption in a special sphere, and with vast resources at command, his energy found ever-increasing outlets in channels of new enterprise, which extended to many parts of the world, and which he undertook, in many instances, single-handed. Altogether self-reliant, he did not desire, and often suspected, the counsels of others. He was able, therefore, to live away from the centre of business life. To breathe fresh air and live apart were, for him, the necessary conditions of mental and bodily health. Hence his abode in the wilderness.

A special wire, laid on to the main line of telegraph, brought all that he required to know direct into his own working-room. "Thus," he would say, "I avoid all that superfluous stuff which even business men can't keep out of business conversation. What I want is facts simply, not opinions. I can form these for myself." At one end of the telegraph a familiar spirit collected facts, and committed them concisely to wire; at the other end, a second familiar—a laconic secretary—received the facts, and placed them, without comment, before his employer.

The scenery was nothing to Mr. Glencairn. He walked about continually, indeed, in the open air. But he did his work thus, and was too "inverted" to have much of an eye for the outer world. He only knew that the sea air and the breath of pine and heather gave him vigor and kept his mind elastic; while, as for solitude,

many an elaborate scheme would have fallen still-born, but for the freedom from interruption with which his unpeopled desert favored him. So that about this castle of gloom and its *château* there was no mystery at all.

From these few hints as to the characteristics of Mr. Glencairn, the reader will perceive that the contrast between him and his son was as marked as possible; and, indeed, what nature had ordained in this respect had been further developed by the exceptional relations which had existed between them from Cosmo's earliest boyhood. His mother, long since dead, had been a well-born lady, whose family had chosen to treat as a *mésalliance* her marriage with Mr. Glencairn, though already rich, and rapidly rising to great wealth. They had discarded her accordingly—at least during the lifetime of her parents. Eventually, however, her only brother, who loved her much, contrived to get over her indiscretion and to forgive her; and when she died, since he had no other heir for his considerable property, he made certain overtures to his widowed brother-in-law as to the upbringing and future destinies of the boy Cosmo. This Colonel Wildgrave—an ex-Guardsman, a man of the world, humane, accomplished, and a universal favorite in society—loved the little boy for his mother's sake; but he felt that if his nephew were to be his future representative, he, on his side, had a right to stipulate that Cosmo should be brought up according to his ideas, introduced into his world, and put into the grooves of life which he approved. In this sense, then, were his overtures.

Mr. Glencairn had a trader's reverence for realized wealth—for capital, landed high and dry on the bank, beyond the reach of commercial fluctuations—and he received the proposals well. "It must be seven thousand to eight thousand pounds a year at least," he said inwardly; and, aloud, that he had no educational prejudices. He then pointed out that, as a general rule, a merchant's son could never rely upon an hereditary fortune from his father, and ought therefore to be taught to make his own way. At the same time, if Cosmo's independence of personal exertion were assured—if his uncle's inheritance were pledged to him—then, indeed, his uncle was free to form him, launch him, do with him, in fact, exactly as seemed to him to be best. Of course, natural affection was to be considered. Cosmo, according to the protocol, was to be much with his papa, whose ample purse was in the mean time to defray the boy's expenses. The agreement was concluded, and loyally carried out, although the article about "natural affection" was by no means strained.

Mr. Glencairn was deeply absorbed in other cares, and he had no great natural sympathy or tenderness, so that he gladly humored the boy's manifest inclination to spend the bulk of his holidays with his uncle and aunt. Thus, by degrees, "home," with him, came to mean his uncle's house, and his father's house was only looked upon as the scene of occasional visits. To his uncle and his aunt he gave all his affection. Blessed with bright and genial natures, they captivated the boy's sympathy and confidence. They entered into all his young enthusiasms and ambitions; and if, proud of his abilities and the promise of his nature, they erred on the side of letting

him shape, in his later school and college days, his own course, in accordance with what they believed to be his genius, they had all along done their best not to "spoil him," in the common acceptance of the term. Above all things, they had aimed at making him a loyal, high-bred gentleman. Parents, and more than are most parents, they were to him. Healthy home influence and training, education at Eton and Trinity, a commission in the army, and an entry into good society under the best auspices—these, and the results flowing from such experiences, were what the substituted parentage did and procured for Cosmo. But all these advantages gradually widened the gulf which nature had placed between the father and the son. Neither public school nor university could credit itself with Mr. Glencairn's education. Art and literature were for him the *hors-d'œuvres* of life, which could not concern a man whose life was already full to overflowing of graver concerns. The army he regarded, on the one hand, as an expensive and inefficient method of insurance; and, on the other, as a toy devised in the interests of the privileged classes. As for "society," in the limited sense of the term, he knew no more of its components and usages than he did of Greek iambs or the duties of a squadron leader.

Habits of life and thought, tastes, aims, standards—everything, in a word, which differentiates a man—sundered him from his son. At the very best, their relations—though not unkindly—had not been natural. From the earliest period, Mr. Glencairn had looked upon Cosmo in a double light. He was his child, to be sure, and, as such, subject to his control and domination; but, beyond this, he was mixed up with the idea of "realized capital," and, as such, the object of a certain instinctive veneration, scarcely consonant with the parental relation. As time went on, and Cosmo's character and ways of life developed, this respect was progressively enhanced; for, however much a man may affect to disregard what does not seem to touch the special groove in which he has embedded himself, there are influences which will affect all sorts and conditions of men—the charm of high-breeding, for example, and a wide and liberal range of knowledge.

After Cosmo had been for some years in the army, the deaths of his uncle and aunt occurred, almost simultaneously. The double blow fell very heavily upon him; and it was during the solitude and depression of his period of mourning that he resolved upon abandoning the service, in favor of a more "earnest" career. Henceforth there was no monetary tie between Mr. Glencairn and Cosmo; and since his new projects led the latter into much foreign travel, he had latterly seen very little indeed of his father; and now their relations were more than ever unlike those of father and son. To his son, Mr. Glencairn was more than ever the one-sided, concentrated money-maker—comprehensible indeed, but not admirable, except in regard of unsullied probity. To his father, Cosmo's relation to funded capital was more and more accentuated. On the whole, however, though much sympathy between them was impossible, there was a fair amount of mutual respect, from widely different stand-points.

CHAPTER XIV.

COSMO found his father at home—a tall, erect, iron-gray man of threescore, or thereabouts, with a firm mouth, and hard but honest gray eyes.

"Glad to see you, Cosmo," he said. "I got your telegram. Only back from Paris myself three days; there on Land Company business; fancied you might be there at the same time; thought you were due: were there, I suppose?" Mr. Glencairn's conversation was rather telegraphic in style—condensed, jerky, and elliptical.

"I think not," replied Cosmo. "I passed through Paris merely."

"And where are you from?"

"From the Italian lakes last."

"Still bitten with the picture mania, hey?"

"I am still fond of pictures; but there's not much in that way down there."

"Ah, well. Any news?"

"No; I think not." (Could there be any news under such circumstances?)

"Been well?"

"Thanks; extremely so. And you?"

"I am always well."

Then came that pause which occurs between two men who, with nothing in common but the formal tie of relationship, are painfully conscious of the fact.

"My aunt is well, I hope?" Cosmo resumed, as a forlorn hope.

"Your aunt is never ill. No one so tough. You'll find her tougher than ever, I think," he added, with a grim smile.

Then came another pause, relieved by "the weather," but inappreciably, for Mr. Glencairn set his face against iteration, and "identified" it, through any disguise, with the eye of a detective. At last there really seemed to be nothing more to be said between the two, and it was a palpable relief to both when the thunder of the dressing-gong broke up the *tête-à-tête*.

When Cosmo returned to the drawing-room, he found the party already assembled, consisting, besides his father, of another gentleman and the aunt for whom he had made inquiries.

There is always something rather risky about a maiden aunt—that is to say, when she is of a "certain age?" and Cosmo's aunt Griselda was, very distinctly, one of the "dangerous classes." Resembling her brother in person, she had his tall stature and unflinching eyes—which latter don't, as a rule, improve the female face; and when, as in this case, associated with a cruel mouth, they are not the kind of eyes with which one cares to exchange many glances.

Miss Glencairn "went in for" religion bitterly; she employed it as the buttress of her misanthropy, and used Holy Writ, as an Irishman uses his shillalah, for purposes of assault and battery. The main article of her creed was that she was "elect," and (as is rather the way with the creeds of the "elect") the spiritual eligibility of her neighbors did not bulk very largely in it. She also held that "whatever is pleasant is wrong," and certainly acted up to this article, in so far that she denied herself the practice of all those sweet and gracious charities which are Christianity's pleasantest outcome. Cosmo had always regarded her with an aversion, tempered, in childhood, by the feeling that it must be wrong

to dislike one who was so much mixed up, as she appeared to be, with the Bible. Eventually he arrived at a sort of compromise, and she became to him something like the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed—sacred, perhaps, and certainly awful, but lovable by no manner of means.

She had hated Cosmo's mother with more than the normal *acharnement* of sisters-in-law, and she cordially detested him. The animosities of such women reach beyond the grave, and transcend the limits of generations.

The party was completed by Mr. Hopper, an individual whom Mr. Glencairn had promoted, in years gone by, from managing clerk in his house to be junior partner, and who now, thanks to the same influence, occupied the post of managing director in "Glencairn & Co., Limited," with a large salary and a position of influence at the Board, due to his knowledge of the iron trade—and to other personal attributes.

In person he was

"A little, glassy-headed, hairless man,"

of a uniform drab color, and with a neutrality of expression that would have baffled a physiognomist. Interpreted by his preposterous baldness, however (for baldness *does*, somehow, suggest respectability), this blank was placed to his credit, and taken as satisfactory evidence of simple-minded probity. He had obviously not forgotten his earliest relations with his patron, in whose honor he exaggerated an habitual eagerness to assent, which sometimes led him to complete for his interlocutor a sentence, or word, which stood between him and the fruition of acquiescence. Victor Hugo would have called him "an incarnate Yes." Another propensity, connected with an earlier and humbler stage of life, was still to be observed in him, and that was a certain waywardness with regard to the letter *h*; but, to do him justice, this was only manifest under circumstances of strong excitement.

All this baldness and acquiescence, combined with a talent for making things pleasant and for concealing considerable powers of initiative (while using them dexterously), made Mr. Hopper exactly the sort of man to appear the mere instrument of his Board, and to be its mainspring.

Miss Glencairn received her nephew with marked frigidity. Her manners expressed the watchful reserve of a policeman resolved "to use against" his prisoner any statement which he may inadvertently make on his way to the station-house. Mr. Hopper, on the contrary, welcomed his patron's son with characteristic effusiveness. "Ply me with hard sayings!" his manner seemed to say; "give me largely of the bread of paradox, that I may butter it (and you), and devour it greedily!"

Dinner being presently announced, the ill-assorted quartet repaired to the dining-room and sat down to the meal, after it had been aggressively blessed by Miss Glencairn.

Mr. Glencairn was taciturn constitutionally; his sister was so, partly from habit, partly because she disliked her present company; and as for Cosmo, he had so little in common with the others, and received such scant encouragement to talk from his aunt and father, that he too was very silent. Thus Mr. Hopper, whose conversational talent lay chiefly in assent, was

rather in difficulties; it being manifestly hard to "say ditto" to people who advance no propositions whatever.

It was, however, his *métier* to "make things pleasant;" and a silent meal being clearly unpleasant, he made, under much discouragement, loyal efforts to keep the ball of conversation rolling. Mr. Glencairn occasionally snubbed Mr. Hopper, but (just as he accepted his *outré* acquiescence) rather, as it seemed, from a mechanical habit, than from any special interest he took in Mr. Hopper's views. Miss Glencairn also snubbed him, as she snubbed every one when she could, simply out of "contrariness" and as dogs delight to bark and bite. Under all these trying circumstances, Cosmo was rather a godsend to him, for he was a novelty; and bethinking himself of the young man's travels as a good conversational "claim" to work, Mr. Hopper commenced operations on it with the energy of a gold-seeker.

"It's not wonderful," he cried, "at your age, and with your talents, tastes, and fortune, that you should like to travel. I can conceive its joys. I can see its advantages."

"A rolling stone, Mr. Hopper," said Miss Glencairn, in a deep, knelling, too-late-too-late-ye-cannot-enter-now tone of voice—"a rolling stone gathers no moss, none."

"True, ma'am, most true; but—let us consider a little—though that may be a disadvantage to some, nay, to most stones, yet perhaps, where you have a polished marble, the necessity for moss may, in a sense, be dispensed with—in a sense, of course. Ah, ma'am! when a man travels, he don't (so to speak) rust. There's the great point. When the wheel revolves, it *can't* rust. All 'stay-at-homes,' like myself, are conscious of rusting. Sadly. All of us."

"Hopper!" said Mr. Glencairn.

"Sir?"

"I stay at home mostly, and I'm not conscious that I'm—"

"Rusty!" exclaimed Mr. Hopper. "Of course not, sir; I said 'like myself,' not *you*, sir. Too fine a metal, if I may so express myself. Gold don't rust, eh? ha! ha! And then the mental activity! But with *me* it's different—quite. Look at me!"

"I should have thought," said Cosmo, "that the excitement of business would keep off the rust."

"You're perfectly correct, Captain Cosmo; in a sense, that is: but there are two or three different ways of rusting."

"If you lay up for yourself treasures upon earth," knelled Miss Glencairn, "as I fear you do—as I *know* you do—that is one way in which you will assuredly acquire rust. What does the Bible say?"

"I know, ma'am, I know—only too well. I honor the Bible, ma'am—I try to square my life with its maxims; but, in the present depressed state of the iron trade, there's no rust of that sort coming my way. With 'pigs' at 49—I beg your pardon, ma'am, with pig-iron at forty-nine shillings the ton—the poor sinner has nothing to hope, I should say to apprehend, in *that* direction. He ought to be thankful, perhaps, for his freedom from temptation—as thankful as the old Adam will permit, and—"

"Hopper!"

"Sir?"

"Is it, or is it not, a business maxim that the man who mixes up religion with business is a man to be distrusted?"

"It is, sir, most unquestionably," replied Hopper, in a voice of deep dejection, which might either imply regret for the existence of so deplorable a maxim, or penitence for his own lapse into religion.

"I wish you would lay it to heart, then."

"Oh!" cried Miss Glencairn, rearing a warlike crest—"oh, this is indeed monstrous! The merest heathenism! Brother!"

"Well?"

"What does the Bible say?"

"The Bible, Griselda, says that there is a time for all things, and I say that the time for religion is neither during business hours nor at the dinner-table."

"I should like to know, then, how you interpret 'in season and out of season?'"

"I don't interpret it at all, and, what's more, I won't *have* it interpreted either at my dinner-table or in my business room. Change the subject, Hopper, if you please."

The "religious difficulty" was one of frequent occurrence between Mr. and Miss Glencairn; but when the former adopted this trenchant method of adjusting it, his sister knew that she might as well strike her colors at once; which she now accordingly did, and relapsed into an angry silence, only broken by some muttered allusions to Mammon, Apostasy, and the Thessalonians.

Charged to change the subject, Mr. Hopper flew back with alacrity to Cosmo's travels.

"Now, Italy, Captain Cosmo," he said, "*that* must be a fine country—in its way, of course. Vesuvius, and—by-the-bye, sir, did you ever see Garibaldi?"

"Yes, I have had that pleasure. Indeed, I made a pilgrimage to Caprera, and visited him in his own home."

"Prodigious! to think of that! Now, sir, is he very fierce, should you say?"

"No; I should say decidedly not. A little child might play with him; in fact, a little child was playing with him when I arrived. He was very rheumatic at the time, however, which might account for it."

"Clearly so. Quite. Well, what did he say about the state of things?"

"That's rather a wide question," laughed Cosmo.

"So it is, sir, unreasonably vague. Well, I suppose he would like to drink the old pagan's blood? You'd make *that* out, I fancy?"

"I don't know to whom you allude."

"The Pope, captain, the Pope, sir!"

"The Pope is a very good old man, Mr. Hopper. I think it is altogether wrong to speak of him as a pagan."

"Distinctly so, sir. It was a jest; a poor one, I admit. Did Garibaldi speak of his Holiness?"

"No; in fact, we did not talk politics at all."

"I see, I see: better so, better so."

This complaisance to the Pope was, however, too much for Miss Glencairn, who, unmindful of her brother's edict, dashed into the conversation, brandishing her tomahawk.

"For shame, Mr. Hopper! For shame, Cos-

mo! 'Holiness!' 'Good old man,' forsooth! This is putting bitter for sweet. Pagan? ay, he is a double-dyed pagan! Shame to the Protestant who denies it! Worse than all the pagans that have gone before. The dragon! The deceiver! The adversary! Holiness? Is sin holy? Is blasphemy holy? Who, I should like to be told, is 'the scarlet-colored beast?' Who is the beast 'having seven heads and ten horns?'—answer me that. Who is he?"

"I suppose," said Cosmo, suppressing a strong inclination to laugh—"I suppose you wish me to say he is the Pope; but I can't identify *him* with these astonishing hyperboles—indeed I can't."

"This comes of foreign travel! This is cosmopolitanism, I suppose. We turn our backs on the blessed light; we go into the dark places of the earth: no wonder we can't discern the truth. But you, Mr. Hopper—you, who have *not* been lapping up error at the waters of Marah; you, who have *not* been rolling idolatry 'like a sweet morsel under your tongue'—I ask you, who is this 'having seven heads and ten horns?'"

Mr. Hopper, though he had spoken so handsomely of the Bible, and, indeed, sometimes affected a Scriptural twang when Mr. Glencairn was not by, perhaps knew the spirit of Holy Writ better than he knew its letter; the apocalyptic lore was, at all events, beyond his range, and he was sorely mystified by all these heads and horns. He glanced at his patron, hoping for his support, but saw nothing in that quarter save a look of grim amusement, inconsistent (Mr. Hopper thought) with his recent words. He looked at Cosmo; but *he* wore the expression of a man who has fired his shot and does not mean to waste another cartridge. The Avenger reiterated her question. Whereupon poor Hopper tried to trim, and began to drop his *h's*, stammering that "as for these 'eads and 'orns, much was to be said for them; but, at the same time, perhaps a good deal in an opposite sense," and then broke down and truckled—mumbling that he was an erring mortal, and could not presume to oppose his opinion to that of one so notoriously Scriptural as Miss Glencairn. Whereupon that lady, unmollified by the compliment, asked if she was therefore to understand that he *did* reserve an opinion favorable to the Pope—in short, clamored for a distinct declaration as to the real proprietorship of the "seven heads and ten horns." Whereupon Mr. Glencairn and Cosmo both laughed outright; and Mr. Hopper, lured to his destruction by the supposed encouragement, rashly attempted to escape from the dilemma by turning the whole thing into a joke, and remarked that, "in any case, seven heads were too many for *any* one man to keep clear and straight, and that if the Pope were to be docked of a few of them—say four—it would probably be for the advantage of Christendom; while, as for the ten 'orns—" But Mr. Hopper was not allowed to finish his impious sally.

"Was he aware that the language he was playing with was from Holy Writ?" Mr. Hopper was not sure, but thought (as a shot) that it *might* be from the Apocrypha. And then the visuals of Miss Glencairn's wrath were frankly opened upon him; and he learned, among other striking facts, that there existed a strong parallelism

between himself and many of the most abandoned characters of Old Testament history—all with very hard names except Og, the King of Bashan; who, in other respects also, was perhaps the least open to reprehension.

For a short time Miss Glencairn was permitted thus to buffet Mr. Hopper; but she soon infringed Mr. Glencairn's private act against iteration, and then he interposed, walking quietly into the *mêlée*, and rescuing, so to speak, the dishevelled manager from the clutches of his antagonist.

"That is enough, Griselda," he said. "Mr. Hopper, take a glass of that Marcobrunner. I hope you'll find it better than the water of Marah."

And when Mr. Hopper made a glozing and weak-kneed attempt to right himself with Miss Glencairn, by inquiring if she were *absolutely positive* that the seven heads and ten horns were *not* "out of 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' which he fancied—he thought—he knew"—Mr. Glencairn closed him also, again inviting him to change the subject. So there was nothing for it but silence and wrath on Griselda's part, and Marcobrunner and discomfiture on the part of Mr. Hopper.

From this state of limpness, however, he gradually emerged, by putting some questions to Cosmo as to the Italian rate of exchange; and having elicited his views as to the depreciation of the paper currency in that country, gradually worked his way back to smooth plumage and general acquiescence and admiration.

"You hear what he says, Mr. Glencairn?" he cried. "A summary, sir! Terse. Concise."

"I hear it," said Mr. Glencairn; "but, with due deference to Cosmo, I must take some ex—"

"Ceptions!" shouted Hopper. "Unquestionably. In such matters that is inevitable. But Captain Cosmo's brain has been at work—at work, and to good purpose. I can see that."

"Come, come, Mr. Hopper," said Cosmo, laughing, "you mustn't try to humbug me." And then Mr. Hopper, by a gesture more eloquent than words, disclaimed any such mad and perilous enterprise; and so the strangely constituted symposium went on, Miss Griselda and Mr. Hopper being occasionally called to order by the chairman, and the tenor of the conversation sent topsy-turvy by that autocrat and his peremptory calls for a change of subject. As this requisition was invariably made upon the managing director, whose range of general ideas was very limited, he would have been sorely put to it but for the reserve of Cosmo's travels, which meandered, like a fertilizing rivulet, through the barren wastes of the conversation.

Toward the end of the sitting, this brought him to Athens, with regard to which Mr. Hopper had three ideas: the first, connected with a certain M. Christopoulos, an iron-broker of much flagitiousness, who, it appeared, had on one occasion got to windward of Mr. Hopper; the second, with an unsatisfactory contract for rails for the Piræan railway; and the third, with the Apostle Paul. Thus was the city of Pericles associated in the mind of Mr. Hopper. And apropos of the last head, the unfortunate manager, still burning to rehabilitate himself with Miss Glencairn, thus expanded:

"A fine thing it must be, Captain Cosmo, to

stand, as you have stood, on the top of the Areopagus—which I take to be an edifice on the summit of Mars Hill—a grand thing to stand there and say, 'This is the *very* spot where the great apostle stood and preached to the men of Athens!' It was an act of courage, sir, that. It was a kind of a taking of the heathen by the beard—a kind of a bearding of the lion in his den, if I may so say—that I've always admired him for. I wish some one else would give the scoundrels a bit of his mind nowadays. They must require it, if Christopoulos is a fair specimen. I wish some one would take Christopoulos by the beard. I wish I had the chance." Here Mr. Hopper pantomimed the action of struggling with a beard for some seconds, and added, "I'd *Christopoulos* him! There's a fellow that would have been capable of forging St. Paul's name to an acceptance. I assure you, ma'am, he would. He forged mine."

"Don't address me, Mr. Hopper, if you please," snorted Miss Glencairn; "don't associate me with a conversation where sacred names are treated with irreverence."

"Irreverence, my dear ma'am!—irreverence! Who could suspect me of it?"

"I don't suspect you—I *accuse* you; you are self-convicted. What has St. Paul to do with trade and money-making, I should like to know? Acceptances, forsooth! pollution!"

"Ah, ma'am, you do me injustice! I honor your sensitiveness, though. It's noble. But are we not told that Paul was a tent-maker? and if a tent-maker, then a seller of tents, and so both a manufacturer and a merchant, as well as an apostle. I've always been proud to feel that I belong, in a sense, to Paul's calling. Always."

"He wasn't a trader; he gave everything to the poor brethren."

"There's a great deal in what you say, ma'am—a very great deal. Still, ma'am, the question will arise, 'How did he *get* what he gave?'"

But at this juncture the cup of Miss Griselda's wrath ran over, as not unfrequently occurs with ladies on the slightest adverse application of logic, and she swept from the room with awful dignity.

"You've put your foot in it, Mr. Hopper," said his patron, with a grim smile.

"To my regret, sir—to my deep regret. Bull, so to speak, in a china-shop. The intention was, however, good. I thought it might gratify Miss Glencairn to know the high respect I entertain for one of her—for the apostle; which is genuine, sir, and unfeigned. The business qualities of his mind have always struck me. I've often thought that, as chairman of a com—"

"Hopper!"

"Sir?"

"Let us change the subject, if you please."

CHAPTER XV.

In the drawing-room after dinner Miss Griselda devoted herself to a bilious-looking magazine; Mr. Glencairn read the newspapers; and Mr. Hopper fluttered about the room, perking little observations half to himself, half to Cosmo, who looked at a book of prints, while his mind was occupied with very different subjects. For it had occurred to him that, of the two matters

which had brought him to Edlisfort, the least important might possibly be advantageously opened to Mr. Hopper, who, though ridiculous in social converse, was notoriously a capable man of business. Mr. Hopper would undoubtedly be glad to oblige him, by helping his friend with advice, or perhaps with something more substantial.

He had, of course, no more faith than his father had in that gentleman's hyperbolic respect and devotion; but it was Mr. Hopper's interest to be well with him, and that was sufficient; and it *might* very possibly be in his power to "put something in Phil's way," through some of the various business channels with which he was connected. Then, Mr. Hopper would have no prejudices touching Phil to affect his hearty co-operation, and it was otherwise with Mr. Glencairn. Before the evening terminated, therefore, he had decided that Mr. Hopper should be consulted.

The dinner had been early, and the night was still young, when Miss Glencairn bade them good-night, and removed the pall of her presence. Cosmo, feverishly anxious to get something done before he slept, was debating with himself whether he should now invite his father to give him a private interview and straightway open the paramount matter to him, or whether he should seduce Mr. Hopper to the smoking-room and unfold his wishes as to Phil, when Mr. Glencairn solved the problem by unexpectedly lighting a candle, and declaring with a lusty yawn that he was "played out." "You'll find everything right in the smoking-room, Cosmo," he said; "and I make no stranger either of you or Mr. Hopper, so good-night." Perforce, therefore, he fell back upon the second string to his bow, and invited the manager to accompany him to the den sacred to tobacco and the slaughter of the small hours.

Mr. Hopper was no smoker, but "he could not resist the rare (in every sense) pleasure," etc., etc., and went, grateful.

When they were comfortably established in the sanctum, Cosmo at once drew the conversation into business channels, and notable was the transformation which took place in his companion's manner and style of speech when he found himself once again in his congenial element. Though upon alien topics jerky, grotesque, and inconsequent as the spasms of a fish out of water, Mr. Hopper's speech on his natural subjects flowed smooth, copious, and coherent.

"Company flourishing, I hope, Mr. Hopper?" Cosmo began.

"Thank you, sir, yes. *It* will do. No mistake there. Trade is what they call 'bad,' to be sure. There has been over-production, and there has been a glut, and there has been stagnation, and reduction of wages, and strikes, and alienation of trade. Never mind, sir. A. Glencairn & Co., Limited, weathers them all. We watch; we foresee; we adapt. We're elastic, that's what we are. All a matter, sir, of alternative combinations, sound connections, and, if I may so say, sleepless management. Mr. Glencairn's guarantee is safe, sir—as a church. He guaranteed 'nine' for a term of years, you know. We'll not get below the 'nine' at the worst; and when the rebound comes—*then—aha!*" Mr. Hopper made a large but incomplete circle of his arms, to figure the limitless wealth that might be looked for at the period of the "rebound." He

then went on to express his wonder, as he had often done before, that a man of Cosmo's acumen had never taken any of "our shares," and still greater wonder that he should be contented with mortgages at $4\frac{1}{2}$ and Government stock at $3\frac{3}{4}$. With the greatest deference, Mr. Hopper must say that such returns were "paltry." He was sorry to use so strong a word; but when he considered the capabilities of capital, it *did* seem to him that a man who could sit down content with such returns from such a tremendous source of reproduction, was a man who—who was satisfied with—that which—is "paltry." There was really no other word for it.

"Well, Mr. Hopper," said Cosmo, "the capital, at all events, is safe; and the return, if it be paltry, is at least regular, besides being more than twice over sufficient for my requirements."

"Safe, captain! Sufficient! Why, sir, you might double your fine income, and yet be as safe as the bank, in many undertakings, and unquestionably in ours. And 'sufficient!' Oh, sir, is that a view to take of capital? Think of its power; remember the responsibilities attached to it. Four per cent.! O Lud! It's like cutting off one of your legs and one of your arms, and putting out one of your eyes. It's like encouraging your child to play truant from school. It's like using a hefephant to do the work of a coster-monger's pony. It's a kind of an outrage to Enterprise. It's a slap on the mouth for the spirit of the Hage. Forgive me, captain—forgive my 'eat. O Lud! O Lud!"

It was Mr. Hopper's way to be earnest and eager; and this sort of whole-souled gush was known to tell immensely upon amateur directors and meetings of shareholders flushed to a rose-color by recent announcements of rattling dividends.

Cosmo, who had experienced it all before, laughingly gave it the go-by, by deploring his deadness to the commercial instinct, and his inability to use even half the "paltry" return which the "hefephant" supplied to him.

This gave Mr. Hopper a new point of departure.

"Then there are your 'clippings,' captain—your surpluses. Give them the chance of doing something. Don't *hoard* them. Because the dam browses in idleness, why leave the foal to eat its head off? I'll tell you what it is, sir—in confidence—we see our way to profitable development. We use new capital, not to dilute the profits of the old—mark that!—but to fortify the old and increase its productive power. Ahem! To a trifling extent, we are inclined to increase our capital. I have recommended a small issue of shares—say eighty thousand pounds more or less. Now, sir, to any extent, within that limit, I *think* I can guarantee you a holding with us. The Board, of course, have a right to the refusal of all new shares; but I'm confident that there's not one of us who won't say, 'I'll take my *pro rata* allotment, but I'll transfer it at once to the son of him to whom we all owe so much.' Say the word, Captain Cosmo, and I'll place your surpluses for you. To what figure, now, might the surpluses—"

"I'm sincerely obliged to you, Mr. Hopper; but, really, I haven't thought of changing my system. As to the 'surpluses,' I dare say there's a certain amount of money in some kind of

temporary investments; but how much, I don't know. Every midsummer I have a clearing up with my agent, and everything is settled then, about investments, etc., etc. It is hard work at the time; but, after this yearly audit, I don't give my mind to money matters at all. In fact, they don't interest me."

Mr. Hopper looked at him with a kind of wondering pity, as who should say, "Yet, I suppose this poor devil *may* possibly have a soul!" and then said, "Well, captain, I won't despair of you yet. At your next audit, promise me that you'll give earnest consideration to what I've said. Do, now."

"I certainly will, Mr. Hopper."

"My motives in speaking thus," said the manager, "with this freedom, are simply these—regard for your interests, and veneration for that sublime lever which has 'oisted Great Britain up to the pinnacle of commercial pre-eminence." With which peroration (from his last half-yearly-meeting speech) Mr. Hopper sunk back, violently rubbing the equatorial line of scanty hair which girdled his gleaming head, looking every inch the director who courts inquiry and deprecates applause.

The way being thus paved, and Mr. Hopper having had *his* innings, Cosmo said, "There *is* a matter, Mr. Hopper, on which I wish to consult you, as a man of business, and as a friend."

Mr. Hopper was proud and delighted, and sat up, all attention.

"A friend of mine," said Cosmo, "is in difficulties."

"Monetary difficulties, sir?"

"Monetary difficulties."

Mr. Hopper's face changed a little, his sympathies rather lying with the "surplussed" classes.

"He is almost in want," continued Cosmo.

"Tut! tut! tut! Sad, that—ve-ry sad."

"Yes, it is very distressing to me, who am his oldest friend, and the more so that I am at a loss how to help him. As to helping him with money, that is out of the question."

With this Mr. Hopper promptly coincided; it required no demonstration, he said—none.

"Not," pursued Cosmo, "from unwillingness on my part, but from honest pride on his."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Hopper. The case was evidently going to be a puzzler.

"He is of high education; took an excellent degree at Cambridge; is very intelligent; and yet he has found it impossible to obtain any employment."

"His antecedents, perhaps, not quite—eh?"

"What, Mr. Hopper?"

"Respectable, though not exactly criminal, of course."

"He is *my* friend, sir, and in all respects a gentleman."

"To be sure—to be sure! What *am* I thinking of?"

"He has been unfortunate, and, I must admit, foolish—that is all. You are acquainted with his name, for he is the son of my father's old friend, Mr. Denwick."

"Whew!" Mr. Hopper whistled, apologized, coughed, finally laughed nervously.

"That expresses your opinion of him, does it?" said Cosmo, grimly.

"Far be it from me, sir, to have a bad opinion of any friend of yours. I was merely recalling a

little anecdote of your father's about him—a merry story, a merry story—nothing more.”

“It has not been a merry story for him.”

“He went into some South American securities, if I recollect right, against your father's advice, and lost a good deal of money in a rather comical way.”

“He went into Spanish bonds, and lost his all in a very *tragic* way.”

“Tut! tut! tut! Dear! dear! that's bad—very bad.”

“Yes, it is. Now, do you think you can find him any employment?”

Mr. Hopper rubbed his equator—but in the sense of a man who is invited to perform a miracle—pursed his month, and slowly shook his head. “You see,” he said, at last, “there's nothing we could make of him. University gentlemen are, in some ways above, in others below, business. They're not available—that's the word. We couldn't make a clerk of Mr. Denwick. It wouldn't pay us, and it wouldn't pay him. Besides, we take no *apprentices* or probationers. They must come to us finished. It takes time to *finish* a clerk to the mark of Glencairn & Co., Limited.”

“Well, that is very true; but could you not put him into some berth where his general education would tell? We have lawyers and merchants at the head of our War-office and Admiralty sometimes. Their subordinates supply them with practical details, and their own talents and general knowledge enable them to organize and administer. You *have* various departments, of course?”

“Oh yes, we have—not a few; coal, ironstone, survey, finance, etc., etc.”

“Well?”

“Well, my dear Mr. Cosmo, surely you don't propose to put a novice at the head of one of the departments of A. Glencairn & Co., Limited?”

“Why not?”

“Oh, sir! oh, sir! Think! think! Besides, all our heads of departments have holdings in the Company—some of them large. It's one of our rules; they're, as it were, working partners. That wouldn't suit Mr. Denwick. No.”

“Outside the company, then; through any of your business connections, do you not think you could find *some* employment (he's not proud) for my poor friend—something that would give him work for his brains and food for his body?”

Again Mr. H. shook his head.

“Can you suggest nothing, even?”

Mr. H. could not; but “give him a few minutes, and he would ‘roll it over’ in his mind.”

During the few minutes accorded, the manager went through awful contortions of the face; rose up; moved about the room; stared at isolated flies on the wall; took out a pencil; bit it; calculated; jotted; tousled his equator; finally sat down, smote his leg, and, earnestly gazing at Cosmo, whispered, “I've got it—got it, sir—got it.”

“You have?”

“I have, sir—with your co-operation, but on that condition alone.”

“You may count on that.”

“Ah! I don't know; but a kind of a Providence seems to have connected my talk about your surpluses and your talk about Mr. Denwick. That emboldens me; but, in any case, it is your affair. Now, sir, the thing lies in a nutshell.

Invest twenty-five thousand pounds in our shares, for Mr. Denwick, and he shall have a department by-and-by. In the mean time, as *your* friend, he shall come into my office and learn the details of business. There! the plan is simple.”

“Simple, yes; but Mr. Denwick would not accept a present of twenty-five thousand pounds, even if I thought it right to give it to him.”

“Present! O Lud! Captain, who talks of presents? Let me explain. You advance the money. The shares are bought in his name. The certificates are held by you, as security (*our* security, your father's security—good enough, hey?), and Mr. Denwick pays you five per cent. interest, or what you stipulate for, on the capital; reserves a portion of the surplus for the extinction of the debt; lives on the rest; and qualifies, by the whole transaction, for a lucrative appointment, *should* his acquisitions and capacity warrant his being selected, *by-and-by*. The plan pays you as well as your mortgages do; finds bread and work for your friend, and—what more would you have? At all events, captain, I can suggest nothing else.”

“It's a noble idea!” cried Cosmo, with enthusiasm. “Nothing could be better. I help Phil, without putting him under an obligation which a gentleman could not accept; and help him in a way that will make him work, and keep him from sliding back into old ways and associations—of which, however, I think he has had enough. I can't sufficiently thank you, Mr. Hopper, for your proposal. I close with it at once. But are you certain of your power to get the shares?”

“Leave it to me, sir. Find the money within six weeks, and the shares shall be at your disposal.”

“Poor Phil! how pleased he will be! He will be as grateful to you, Mr. Hopper, as I am. This is indeed luck!”

CHAPTER XVI.

In the morning, Cosmo's first care was to telegraph to Phil that on the next day he would receive a letter explaining all details of a remunerative “career” which was open to him—that the letter would also contain a check for one hundred pounds, being an advance, with which Phil was at once to clothe and house himself properly, and find some pasture-ground more eligible than that which he had been sharing with the black sheep of Leicester Square. And then he wrote the letter, which breathed all the affectionate delight which he felt at being able, “by the luckiest accident in the world,” to help his friend; and worded it with such diplomatic delicacy that you would have almost supposed that Cosmo was the real gainer, and that Phil's part in the transaction was that, by magnanimously undergoing a good deal of toil and risk, he was enabling his friend to obtain a higher rate of interest for his money than heretofore. And these things being done, he went and ruminated for many an hour by the sea, thinking of his love and his hope and his fears, and how he would open the matter to his father, and when. And the day slipped away, and another precarious dinner was got through; and before Mr. Glen-

cairn was "played out," Cosmo asked him, with some trepidation, for a private interview, which was at once granted, and they marched off to the "business room."

Fairly confronted with his father, Cosmo felt much difficulty in opening a conversation in which the initiative lay necessarily with himself. The result of the interview was of vital moment to his happiness (and Hope, once admitted, had grown hourly); and, beyond this, he shrunk, with an almost feminine sensitiveness, from exposing to observation those feelings which are jealously guarded even by natures comparatively coarse. It was with much embarrassment that he commenced the dialogue, scanned by his father's unflinching eyes.

"We have never had any confidential intercourse, father," he said, "and I dare say my request for this interview surprises you."

Here Cosmo paused, and Mr. Glencairn intimated that surprise was an emotion foreign to his nature.

"You are no doubt puzzled as to its object," continued the son.

"Guessing and puzzling would be the merest waste of time. You have a direct statement to make. Is it not so?"

"That is true."

"Then, pray let us have it before us at once."

"I confess I have much difficulty in opening this matter to you. It is of a most delicate nature. It is difficult to plunge directly into a delicate subject."

"In business matters, between men of business, there need be no delicacy, where motives on either side are honest, and the lines of business adhered to."

"You forget that I am not a man of business."

"True; but still you are a gentleman, therefore incapable of proposing to a business man, on a business matter, anything you need be ashamed of—which is the plain English for 'having a delicacy.'"

"Ah! but this is not a matter of business, nor is it a proposal."

"My dear Cosmo, why speak in riddles? You say this is not a business matter, and I have no knowledge of your world. I can't conceive your consulting me on any matter relating to it. I would help you with a guess to start your ideas, if I could, to be done with fencing. You are in trouble, evidently. All the world over, the troubles of young men are mainly connected with the purse or the heart. The former can't possibly affect you—as to the latter, ha! ha! you are not likely to seek me as a confidant; so, my ideas being exhausted, you must speak out—if you *really* want advice or an opinion," he added, looking at his watch.

Cosmo was silent for a minute, and then said, "Well, father, I am not exempt from the troubles of young men—as *you* define them."

"Ah! money, after all! Speculation, of course; ruinous to amateurs. Foreign stock or shares, of course, and a question of holding or selling. Well?"

"No, father, my troubles have nothing to do with money."

"Then it is—"

"Yes," interrupted Cosmo, who shrunk from hearing the divine word uttered by lips that seemed so earthly.

"Yes," he went on; "and now you will understand my hesitation."

"Well, then—"

"Listen, father, pray, and I will try to make you understand." Then, nerving himself with an effort, he went on: "Lately, quite lately, it has been my lot to meet with a lady on whose perfections I will not dilate. It is enough to say that for me she is perfection, and that all my heart was given to her almost unconsciously, and before I had realized the profound impression she had made upon me."

Mr. Glencairn rattled his watch-chain, and gave a little groan, discreetly commuted into a cough.

"She is beautiful," Cosmo went on, "and accomplished; and the only child, the heiress"—(Mr. Glencairn dropped his watch-chain and sat up in his chair)—"of a nobleman of proud lineage and vast possessions—"

Here Mr. Glencairn's natural reserve gave way, and he cried lustily, "Bravo, Cosmo! bravo! Well done, sir!" and made as though he would take his son's hand. Cosmo interrupted him.

"Pray hear all I have to say before you congratulate me."

"Excuse me; one question—is the landed property large?"

"I am sorry to say it is; but—"

"You prefer the funds? or concentration in minerals? Well, remember *they're* exhaustible; but perhaps there *may* be a mineral field into the bargain?"

"I'm afraid it is very probable; but really—"

"Afraid? Tut! tut! depression can't last forever; and even now, if there should be 'hematite' in any quantity—should you suppose, now—"

"Allow me to say, my dear father, that, for a man of business, you strangely anticipate matters, which you will see when I assure you that not only are the lady's affections not secured, but that I dare scarcely hope that they ever could be bestowed on one so unworthy of her, even were every other obstacle removed. Her great prospects are really nothing to me; and even if they did not constitute an obstacle, which, to a certain extent they do, I would rather have her dowerless."

Mr. Glencairn grinned a knowing grin, but said nothing.

"When I found," Cosmo went on, "how deeply my feelings were compromised, there was but one step for me to take—"

"You declared yourself—prematurely, perhaps?"

"No; I said nothing to the lady."

"I see; you went to her father?"

"On the contrary, I left the place at once."

Mr. Glencairn was not a man swift to mirth, but this reply of Cosmo's plumbed the depths of his sense of the incongruous, and he burst into laughter loud and sincere. "I beg your pardon, Cosmo, but—the one step for you to take!—really—ha! ha!—upsets my gravity. I never understood you. I have thought it might be my fault; but now—O Lord!"—and he broke into laughter again—"but now, who but a wizard could understand a man who falls in love with a lady, and thinks that therefore 'the one step for him to take' is to fly from her at once!—frightened by the size of her fortune—is that it?—"

when he has a large one of his own, too—ha! ha! ha! Prodigious!”

“You misunderstand me, father.”

“I hope so, my dear fellow; for the credit of your intelligence, indeed I do.”

“Let me finish my statement, then. You will pardon me for saying that in my world—the distinction is your own—that in the society which I frequent, money is not *necessarily* a paramount consideration. It is important, of course, everywhere, but it can’t do everything; and though in matrimonial matters it can do much, it has its limits of power there too. This lady’s great prospects, though, as I quite honestly say, they are far from an inducement to me, would *not* have deterred me from—from prosecuting my suit. The suit might have been hopeless; still this consideration of her fortune would not have deterred me, because my own fortune would have, so far, removed the suspicion of mercenary motives, as you justly suggest. I would not, therefore, have run away, but for another consideration, which is really the object of my interview with you.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Glencairn, “I’m glad we’re going to reach *some* point at last. I’m really getting a little confused.”

“Admitting that money is the main thing looked at, in this miserable and selfish age, where matrimony is concerned, still, even nowadays there must be some kind of respectability in the antecedents of any suitor. I should say, for instance, that certain taints must not rest on his origin, otherwise he will be rejected by the most mercenary aristocrat. I should say that the hereditary taint of felony or illegitimacy would disqualify him. Father, how do I stand in this respect?”

“Great heavens, sir! what do you mean?” cried Mr. Glencairn, starting from his chair.

“What do you dare to insinuate?”

“Nothing—I insinuate nothing. The honor of our blood must be as dear to me as to you. I ask a simple question. I will put it differently. Father, who are we?”

Mr. Glencairn laughed scornfully. “Who are we? I am Archibald Glencairn, formerly principal partner in the firm of Glencairn & Co., ironmasters, now a large shareholder in the company of that name, and a financial operator known, ay, and respected, on most European bourses. As to yourself, you are better acquainted with the subject; but if you add your own experiences to mine, the question ‘Who are we?’ is satisfactorily answered, I take it.”

“No, father, not at all. In the sense of your answer, I require, of course, no information. I am not trifling. You treat this as an impertinence. Is that just? I am your son, and of full age; surely I am entitled to the information I demand. When I was a child, my questions were always evaded. Once only did I get a sort of answer from my uncle Wildgrave—and what an answer! It was to the effect that the less I inquired the better; that there was little to know, and that little, discreditable. In fact, I gathered that there was a flaw or a stain on my origin. I never repeated the question again; and your continued silence on the subject confirmed what my uncle hinted. Now it is everything to me to know—the truth; and I now ask you frankly, What is our pedigree?”

“Pedigree?” laughed Mr. Glencairn, resum-

ing his seat, “ha! ha! I’m afraid that has to be manufactured. Don’t look so horrified; it is done every day. A mere question of money—and you are rich. I have heard that a high-priced article (including counterfeited title-deeds, and even tombstones) almost baffles an expert to detect its spuriousness. If people are fools enough to value such things, they deserve to be humbugged. It is more a practical joke than a fraud, for it simulates something which, intrinsically, is nothing. The fools and the fooled are equally beneath contempt.”

“That does not touch my question, which is still unanswered. Am I to understand that you are the first of our family?”

Mr. Glencairn laughed, and said, “I believe my father would have resented that idea emphatically.”

“Oh! you *had* a father, then—forgive me, I mean socially speaking?”

“I understand your meaning. Yes; my father was, socially speaking, a gentleman. At least I understand that a commissioned officer is technically so considered. He was a captain in the Indian army.”

“And my grandmother—his *wife*?”

“My mother, his *wife*, was the daughter of an Indian judge.”

Cosmo gave a sigh of relief and said, “Then—then—had he done—was there any cloud on his reputation?”

“No, I think not, ‘socially speaking.’ He was a foolish man, and a violent man, and a dissolute man. His death proved him to be all three, for he was shot in a duel to satisfy his antagonist’s family honor, which had been outraged by him.”

“But there was nothing else?”

“No; ‘socially speaking,’ he was clean-handed; brave, too, I believe, and even distinguished.”

“Thank God!”

“Small mercies, Cosmo.”

“Then my uncle Wildgrave, what did he mean?”

“Ah! your uncle was superfine. All the Wildgraves were. We must go further back for his horror of the Glencairns.”

“Your grandfather was—?”

“My grandfather was an indigo-planter in India; but not much is known about him, except that he lived in India the greater part of his life, and died there.”

“And his wife?”

“Well, Cosmo, as far as I can make out, there *had* been some little oversight on his part about *her*. In fact—though, let us hope, in other respects, a good husband—he never went through the form of marriage with her.”

Cosmo started to his feet.

“Then,” he cried, “my worst fears are realized.”

“Come,” said his father, “that is a little unreasonable, surely. Be thankful for wedded parents and wedded grandparents. It is really a fair allowance, as matters go.”

Cosmo sunk into a gloomy silence, till he remembered that the pain was (or might be) his father’s as well as his own, and then, to break the pause, he said,

“I understood from my uncle or from you, long ago, that we are of Scottish descent. Is this so?”

"Oh yes; the indigo-planter certainly went from Scotland. There is no doubt about that; neither any doubt that he changed his name. But, now we are on the subject, and since you are entitled to know all I know, I may as well tell it you—little though it is—once for all, and you can form what conjectures you please. You are aware, I presume, that I have an elder brother?"

"Yes; but I know nothing more than that he exists, and is in India. By-the-bye, I understood, also, that you and he were on bad terms. You have never mentioned him to me before."

"Right; and I mention your uncle Robert now, simply because it is mainly from him that I know anything about our family history. We quarrelled, or, rather, he quarrelled with me years ago. The matter was simple enough. He grew tired of the civil service. He saw fortunes being made rapidly all round him in indigo. He thought he would like to make a fortune rapidly too—in indigo; but he lacked capital. I was prosperous; he knew it, and invited me to supply him with the necessary funds. I declined—mainly because to have disengaged so much capital from my business at that time would have thrown my own career back for years. Besides this, Robert had no business qualities; almost inevitably he would have lost the capital, and, having resigned the service, would have had nothing to fall back upon. So I refused, for his sake as much as my own. He took a wrong-headed view of things; accused me of I don't know what all, and abjured my relationship in a theatrical way, which showed how just was my belief that he would have failed in indigo. Well, well, he ought to thank me now, for he is high in the service; he don't, however. His affair. In our friendly days we used often to talk together on this—this genealogical matter. He was sixteen years of age when our father died, and the statements he had from his lips amounted in effect to this: The indigo-planter—my grandfather—was of a good Scottish family; but having been very wild, as a lad, was in perpetual trouble with his people, and was at last turned out-of-doors by them, in consequence of an intrigue with a tenant's daughter, which scandalized the good people of the old world in a way which this more philosophical age would scarcely comprehend. He took the young woman with him to India, where, after having given birth to one child (my father), she died. His resentment against his own family was very deep (as is often the case with those who have offended their families); probably he was theatrical, like your uncle Robert, for he had dropped their name from the moment he left home, and was never known in India by any other name than 'Glencairn.' He would conceal his real name, no doubt, by way of insult to those who had repudiated him. It is quite in keeping with Highland pride to abjure the abjurer, and scornfully spurn a connection which has already been renounced on the other side. So it is probable that his real name was never known; for he seems to have made no secret that the name we inherit from him was assumed—and the true name, had it been known, would likely have come down to us as this fact has come. No record of a marriage was left by him; nor is there any tradition that he owned to, or pretended to, a marriage. The evidence is all

the other way. Old Mr. Denwick—the father of my friend and benefactor—was the indigo-planter's intimate friend in India, and became my father's guardian; and, being still alive at his death, was for a time the guardian of us children, which trust he bequeathed to his son—my friend, to whom I owe nearly everything. I think, therefore, that if there had been anything else to know, we should have learned it through the Denwicks: unquestionably, if there had been any grounds for believing that my father (who was most anxious and sensitive on the subject) was born in wedlock, these grounds would have been stated. Mr. Denwick, however, denied all knowledge of the existence of such grounds. Here, then, is a blank, which can only, I think, be interpreted in one way. My father, according to Robert, had a variety of theories, some of which he shared, which made for his own legitimacy. I apprehend they had no solid basis. What is conclusive to me is, that no man who was not both a maniac and a villain would have condemned his son to the penalties of illegitimacy by wantonly suppressing evidence of his marriage, because it was contracted in a name which would have identified his son with the race which he had abjured. There, Cosmo, that is positively all I know. If some one could weave a clean pedigree out of it, and identify us with a decent family, I should be glad of it for your sake. For myself, I have got on so well *without* a pedigree that I confess to some indifference on the subject."

When this cold and passionless summation was concluded, there was silence for some time. At last Cosmo groaned out, rather as thinking aloud than as addressing his father, "This accursed taint! can it *ever* be removed?" And then his father spoke. "I see," he said, "you have inherited the Wildgraves' ideas. *They* put the same question to themselves, apropos of me, and answered it in the negative. Well, that unlucky old indigo-planter has a good deal to answer for. I heard enough about him in my young days, when, like you, I aspired to marry into a proud family. I don't owe him a dutiful thought, I can tell you. But how many generations is he to keep in the shade? When do you suppose illegitimacy ceases to disqualify? Three generations make a gentleman, it is said: if so, they abrogate the bar; and you are the third from it. Is it not notorious that nowadays the bar-sinister, provided it is gilt, is no bar to social success? Times have changed since my youth. The world is more sensible; and you have the advantage of a generation over me. You have other advantages—position, solid wealth, lineage undisputed on one side. Fall back upon your mother's pedigree. With that and ten thousand pounds a year and prospects—ay, and *prospects*—you are good enough for any of them. Take my word for it. If *they* think not, do as I did—take your own way. With the lady on your side, you can afford to laugh at them. They'll come round in time, and soon enough. May I ask who the noble lord is?"

"I would rather not mention the name."

"As you please; but whoever he is, he'll come round if the lady is on your side."

"My dear father, the lady doesn't dream of me; but even were it as you suggest, still you misunderstand the case. In some ways I do

recognize the justice of what you say. It does seem monstrous that a bar like this should hang, like a felon's fetter, on generation after generation. But this is an exceptional case. The lady is not only her father's heiress, she is the last of her family—an ancient and historical house, which must merge in the race with which she intermarries. Do you think, then, it would be honorable, without the concurrence of her father—the last male depositary of the family honors, traditions, and prestige—to persuade his daughter to an alliance which would couple their noble name with this ignoble bar? Don't you think it would be something like stealing a possession more valuable in their eyes than all their wealth?"

"No, I don't; but I *do* think, if you'll excuse me for saying so, that you are talking common nonsense. If the lady is the sole heiress of the family prestige (a shadowy inheritance, by-the-by), she is as much entitled to have an opinion about its disposition as about the disposal of the family wealth. You would have no scruples as to the latter appanage, which is of real importance; why, then, about the former, which is a dream—an idea? Well, well, well. You are a gentleman; you *have* your three generations, and that obliterates the bar, to which, I am very sure, this ungenealogical age will never say 'nay.'"

"I am very sure, however, that the noble lord in question will."

"Then the noble lord in question is an—is no wiser than he should be."

"That may be; but he is the guardian of his family honor, and has a right to his own opinion. What that would be, I know too well. He is the proudest of the proud. Twenty generations would not erase this blot. The suitor who seeks *his* approbation had need be immaculate."

"Then take your own way; win the lady, and leave the rest to time."

Cosmo sunk into silence and abstraction. His father's arguments; his own delicate sense of honor; the old peer's pride and prejudices; his own sense of justice; the conflict between the fading dogmas of past generations and the fresh and liberal views of modern life; the eclipse of privilege; and the triumph of individual merit over inherited prestige—these, with his own fond wishes, rushed through his mind, clashing here, coinciding there, tumultuous and chaotic. And slowly from this confusion the dim outline of a compromise evolved itself, which, marking with judicial severity that which made against Cosmo, as well as that which made for him, yielded this balance in his favor, that that which in him was lacking *might* be supplied by personal distinction, won by *personal* effort. That would obliterate flaws—of which justice claimed the obliteration—and by a nobler expedient than the brute force of wealth.

"Ah!" he murmured aloud, "now would be the time to concentrate vague ambitions and desultory efforts! Could I but make a name for myself—a great reputation—then, indeed—But what can I do? Yes, achievement is the root of real aristocracy. He who achieves must be nobler than he who merely inherits the rewards of achievement."

"Right, sir, right; therefore achieve."

Cosmo started to find he had been thinking

aloud, and that his father's eyes were fixed upon him with a half-friendly, half-mocking expression.

He rose, and said,

"Father, I thank you for your information and advice. The unknown evil is always more formidable than that which we see, and my fears were greater than the fact. The fact is, however, sufficiently grave; indeed, an obstacle all but insurmountable, though, *possibly*, in one way—Well, there is no good pursuing the subject. One explanation, however, I must make. In my anxiety to know the disability which birth lays me under, I may have seemed to you to imply that, that being removed, no other impediment would remain. If I conveyed that impression, let me now correct it. That I am unworthy of this lady, I am very certain; that she might think otherwise is but a dream."

"Well, Cosmo, as I said before, I don't understand you, and never shall, I suppose; but what, then, does the whole thing amount to?"

"It amounts to this, that I came away from—a certain influence, to dissipate dreams, or, if you please, to deaden pain, by using my faculties and acquirements, such as they are, in some active sphere. I still wish to find that sphere. Our conversation has, at least, made no difference in that desire."

"There is but one obvious sphere for a man in your position, of your culture and general views, and that is the sphere of politics. You have surely turned your thoughts in that direction?"

"Yes, I have; but there are obstacles—"

"Obstacles! obstacles! obstacles!" shouted Mr. Glencairn. "Lions in every path! This passes patience! Is this all that comes of an interminable education?"

Cosmo felt somewhat abashed at the rude justice of these remarks, but replied,

"I did not say that in *this* case the obstacles were insuperable. But it has appeared to me that when a man goes into political life, he ought to be able to identify himself heartily with one of the great parties—otherwise his career will be a failure, and he himself useless. I have never, as yet, seen my way to unqualified enlistment with any party."

"Oh, if that is all, it is a small matter. Every one leans toward certain outlines of political belief, sentiment, prejudice, or what you please to call it. With this party or that or the other, he will find that these outlines are followed in a general way. No thinking man can honestly pledge himself to conform to all the details of all the measures which a party may support. All he can hope is to be able to subscribe to the general sentiment which guides it—to recognize its key-note as his own. I should fancy that your views are moderate, and that this should not be difficult to you."

"No, certainly; but I have strong opinions on some important subjects which have been made shibboleths of party adhesion, though no general principle, as distinctive of either party, is involved in them. Well, you can see that, if I were honest in my declarations, I should run a very strong chance of falling between two stools, and failing to be returned. Suppose I go consistently with the Conservatives on all but one subject, but that that subject has *arbitrarily* been

made a Conservative test; I should expect that the Conservatives would oppose me for my defection on that point, and the Liberals for my generally Conservative views, and *vice versâ*. Well, but suppose, nevertheless, I *did* get into the House. I should not go there without ambition; and do you think I could look for political advancement from a party to which I ran counter on one or more test-questions?"

"Ah, well, when a man has been in the House for a little, and sees things from nearer points of view, it's wonderful how well he manages to harmonize his views, on the whole, with his party—unless, of course, he is a crack-brained crotcheteer, when he is not worth considering. By-the-bye, if it is only a question of *getting into* the House, there, I think, I could help you. Indeed, it would suit me *personally* to do so. There is a borough in which we—I—have much to say. It is not much of a *political* borough; indeed, I don't think the good folk there care two straws about any public question. They have a local interest to promote—a healthy legitimate interest—and what they chiefly want is a member who will nurse this interest. To a moderate man on either side, who would give some time and trouble to this affair, I think I could almost guarantee the seat. I take it that you have a Conservative bias, but that on some points you are inclined for discreetly liberal progress?"

"Yes; I think that, on the whole, defines my position."

"Very well, I will now give you all the details, and you can think it over. I may say that I believe the sitting member will apply for the Chiltern Hundreds at the end of this session."

Mr. Glencairn then briefly laid the details before his son, and, at last, the longest conversation that had ever taken place between them came to a close.

There is no doubt that the direct and unsentimental view which Mr. Glencairn had taken of every subject discussed had produced its effect upon Cosmo, and carried him farther than he could have believed toward his father's position. He had half admitted that, under certain conditions of compromise, his hopes need not be altogether abandoned; and now his father's prompt energy was hurrying him toward a step which *might* lead to these conditions, and which certainly would force him into a sphere of activity, between which and others he had vacillated—doubtful of the maturity of his powers and preparation—doubtful where his special aptitude lay. Even for his own mere peace of mind, he felt that active employment was now indispensable. Open to him, apparently beyond a doubt, an honorable sphere now lay. Would it not be well, then, to abandon hesitation; to cut himself free from this eternal weighing of alternatives, and combating of scruples? The step *might* lead to this or that, eventually; in the mean time, it meant "work," which nothing else offered. Would it not be well, then, to close with what would supply this supreme necessity? And if it meant hope, too? *Did* it mean hope, too? Well, at least, nothing made a fairer offer of it.

Before Cosmo slept that night his resolve was taken; and next morning he communicated to his father that the borough of — might consider itself suited with a nurse for its "healthy local interest."

CHAPTER XVII.

WE must now borrow the wings of Cosmo Glencairn's fancy, and fly back to the Lake of Como, where the golden summer days passed pleasantly and peacefully for the occupants of the Villa Bianca; so pleasantly, indeed, for Lord Germistonne—who was hard to please—that, as the period of his tenancy drew to a close, he began to turn scowling glances on the mountains of the Engadine, and to use language of bitter scepticism about Gull and the rest of the faculty, apropos of his approaching sojourn in the Alpine paradise. "Empirics and blunderers—all of them!" he would grumble. "Because it is the right thing for Sir Peter Rabbits to go to that detestable place" (Sir Peter was a civic dignitary whose "case" had been mentioned as having points of similarity to his own), "why should it be the right thing for me? Monstrously improbable that my organs could ever have resembled those of an alderman, even before he had bedevilled them with gross living and Guildhall banquets! Name of Rabbits, too! Preposterous!" But, after all, this constituted a grievance without which his life would scarcely have been in order.

Pleasantly, too, the days passed for Esmè—all unconscious of the influence she was exercising over the lives and destinies of others—happy in fancy-free meditations and in pursuits congenial to a graceful and cultured mind. The weather continued to be faultless; the sun shone every day in a cloudless sky, but the mountains lent themselves to nature's pleasant conspiracy, and sent down light airs, that came tempered from the abodes of snow, to fan the favored district. As for the Ravenhall party and Tom Wyedale, the delights of the place were not so patent to them. Poor Mrs. Ravenhall! long, long ago had the bloom of young enthusiasm for anything in this weary world been brushed from her *blasé* spirit; the voices and the aspects of external nature had no message and no meaning for her. But her walk and conversation were so artificial that it came like a second nature to her to simulate whatever for the time being seemed to pay; and thus to all her little circle she was untiring in her raptures over the lake and its environs, which, from morn to night, never ceased to be "quite too divinely lovely and enchanting," to say the least of it.

The few people whom she knew at Cadenabbia were impressed with this. It showed, they said, such freshness, simplicity, and soul; for here was a lady, ordinarily involved in the turmoil of the great world of fashion, retiring without regret from its seductions, at the call of duty, and finding more than consolation in the sweet teachings of the beautiful and the sublime. All this factitious enthusiasm was focused upon Esmè, into whose confidence and affections it was her design to penetrate; and since it appeared that freshness, simplicity, and soul would be the proper "wear" under the circumstances, she thus masqueraded accordingly.

Esmè was rather perplexed by it all, and even, at times, a little bored, when she would say to herself, with unconscious truth and humor, "I wonder why Mrs. Ravenhall seems to think that I must take it as a personal compliment when she says anything pretty about the scenery?"

Of course, the whole thing inexpressibly bored Mrs. Ravenhall herself. Her heart was far away in the crush and scramble of the London season. She was missing everything; she was not being seen at the right places; she was losing ground, perhaps—even, perhaps, being forgotten. The Honorable Nora Hackbut, who contributed Anglo-Continental gossip to one of those weekly papers which are so frank and so exhaustive in describing the private lives and doings of even trivial people, did, indeed, let the world know what Mrs. Ravenhall was about, and what a high opinion she had of the beauties of nature; but this could not compensate for a dreary blank in the *Morning Post* where Mrs. Ravenhall's place knew her no more.

Nor did these vexatious circumstances by any means exhaust the list of Mrs. Ravenhall's trials. She was somewhat in the position of a manager of amateur theatricals, who, besides composing the piece and playing a part in it himself, has to fulfil the combined duties of stage-manager and prompter—now hustling a sluggish member of the *corps* on to the stage, now suggesting a "cue" to the forgetful, and at times even dashing "on" in person to supply the place of an absentee. Her *corps*, it will be observed, was divided into conscious, and unconscious, *dramatis personæ*; and the former—her husband and brother—had to be constantly instructed, cajoled, and stimulated in private; so that, with the additional necessity of keeping the whole company in good-humor with each other, her trials were heavy and incessant. If one of them, even, would have heartily co-operated, it would have been different; but not even Tom, for whose benefit the whole thing was devised, could be got to do so—he was sluggish and procrastinating, and, indeed, played his part in a way that left much to be desired.

As to Mr. Ravenhall, whose rôle was almost a negative one, he gave her continual trouble. He very soon grew tired of the place, and, being indifferent to Tom's interests, could not see why his convenience should be sacrificed to them. Hence he became very restive, and anxious to move on, which involved yet other calls on his wife's powers of stratagem. His wish to escape was, perhaps, not to be wondered at; for, independently of everything else, his relations with Lord Germistoun soon made his position somewhat irksome. The bluff member for—had, in truth, been utterly cowed by the noble lord. At first, things had gone very smoothly between them, for Ravenhall, laying his wife's precepts to heart, carried himself deferentially in the presence of the autocrat, who, mindful of his gallant promise to Mrs. Ravenhall, and moved also by propagandist considerations, was studiously temperate in sentiment and courteous in tone to Mr. Ravenhall. His wife had spoken of the "struggle" going on in his mind—implying that the contest lay between Reason and Radicalism; and the keen old partisan felt that a little tact and diplomacy might be well bestowed in settling the "struggle" in favor of Toryism and Truth. Lord Germistoun, by-the-bye occasionally rather mystified Mr. Ravenhall by subtle allusions to the "struggle" in question, for Mrs. Ravenhall had not revealed to her husband the existence of that phase of his own consciousness; but his stupidity guarded him from untoward discoveries, and things went on serenely for a time.

The characters of the two men, however, made it impossible that they could long do so. Mr. Ravenhall was one of those people who must either trample, or be trampled upon; and being misled by Lord Germistoun's unexpected complaisance and moderation, he presently began to recover his self-assurance, to lose his deferential tone, and even to develop very decided symptoms of bluntness. Lord Germistoun, with a hawk's eye for all this sort of thing, noted the change resentfully; but, in consideration of the "struggle," was able to subdue the feelings of the man to those of the partisan for a little. There are limits, however, to all human endurance; and it is equally certain that, in this country, the majority of men will much more readily endure a strongly expressed dissent from their views, as to principles merely, than as to the personal qualities of this or that party leader whom they follow or oppose.

The principle and the measure may be amicably discussed by the week; but when the Man is introduced, the hour of explosions has arrived. Lord Germistoun's politics were strongly flavored with the personal element; so were Mr. Ravenhall's.

And thus it one day befell that the latter, finding himself in a mixed company, and stimulated by the presence of an admiring constituent, ventured to speak reckless words in enlogy of a great leader, as to whose character—whether purely diabolical or altogether saintly—a keen controversy then raged; whereupon Lord Germistoun forgot all about his gallantry, and the propaganda, and the "struggle," and made short work of the eminent man and his rash disciple. Mr. Ravenhall, alluding to a recent speech of his hero's, had affirmed that "there was no disputing *that*, at all events;" and added some bluff remarks about "malignant stupidity," as distinctive of all those who might think otherwise, not only on this point, but upon the general question of the great man's perfection. The words were not addressed to Lord Germistoun, but they reached his ear, and he at once came into action.

"Let me beg you, then, Mr. Ravenhall," he said, "to write me down 'malignant and stupid.'"

"No, no, Lord Germistoun; no, no!" laughed Ravenhall; "we all know *you* are too clear-headed a man to differ with what I have just said."

"I protest, sir, your test of clear-headedness astounds me—it really does. As to the—the individual of whom you speak, I differ with you to this extent, that I think if he were expelled from the British realms—and with every circumstance of ignominy—it—it would be a fortunate circumstance for the realms, sir. What?"

"It would be a black day for England when that took place; and in the depths of your heart, I am convinced you agree with me."

"Now, isn't this a great deal too monstrous? What the devil, how, may I ask, do you venture to assert that my words and my real sentiments are at variance?"

"Pooh! pooh! pooh! my lord, you take the matter too strongly. I merely mean that I am sure there is room in your mind for admiration of a man's intellect and uprightness, apart from political considerations. That man gives a tone to public life—"

"Yes, he does—a tone of political recklessness and effrontery; and, let me tell you, there is no room in my mind for anything but abhorrence of a traitor."

"Oh! ho! ho!"

"Ah! but it isn't 'oh! ho! ho!'"

"Traitor, Lord Germistoun? You'll scarcely make that out, I take it."

"Yes, sir, I said 'traitor'—and I'll swear to the word, if you please—a traitor whose intellect is perverted, whose uprightness robs us piecemeal of the constitution, tampers with the coronation oath, filches and perverts the Prerogative, sacrifices every conviction to self-interest, and—and—oh! by the Lord Harry, sir! your boldness in speaking of this man as *not* a traitor passes my comprehension."

Ravenhall was white, partly from anger, partly from consternation; but he was not going to cave in, before a constituent, without another struggle.

"Come, Lord Germistoun," he said, rallying his courage, "let us speak as common-sense, patriotic men of the world, and—"

"I should be glad to hear you in that vein, Mr. Ravenhall—monstrously glad."

"And make allowance for differences of judgment, temperament, and so forth."

"No; I will make no allowance for iniquity, however it may be begotten."

"These are hard words, but hard to prove, I fancy. If I chose, I might say some hard words about a certain great man on your side who—"

"Now, Mr. Ravenhall, if you think I am going to bandy *tu quoques* with you, you are mistaken. Legitimate argument, conducted in a temperate tone, I always court; puerilities of this sort I am in the habit of resenting as a personal affront. I simply repeat that the man you speak of is a traitor and—a disgrace; and there is no kind of sophistry that can disturb the facts which support my definition. There! enough of him!"

"There is one thing about him—"

"I distinctly decline to discuss him any further; and, for the future, you will greatly oblige me by avoiding the subject. It disgusts me."

Lord Germistoun looked so awful, and so aquiline, and rapped his words out with such forcible intonation, and with such an air of uttering axioms, that Ravenhall fell before him mute, prostrate, and permanently cowed—shunning intercourse with him for the future as much as possible, and, when in his company, observing, as a rule, a rather sullen silence.

And all this gave grievously superfluous trouble to his wife, who, in her ignorance of the passage of arms which had taken place, went on wasting a world of diplomatic *finesse* and vigilance in hope of promoting more intimate relations between Lord Germistoun and her husband, and thereby of lightening her task of diverting the attention of the former from her serious manoeuvres.

It was, of course, Mrs. Ravenhall's grand object to bring Esmè and Tom into contact. To "do things together" was therefore her constant aim. But there is not much to be done at Cadenabbia beyond its delightful *spécialité* of floating about on the lake, and indulging in the poetry of idleness, and this did not favor her schemes, which pointed to a good deal of *tête-à-tête* inter-

course between the young people. She liked to do things which involved loitering in quiet places, where the party might, insensibly as it were, separate, and Tom and Esmè, without perceiving how it came about, might drift away in company together. Her ingenuity in devising pretexts for such excursions was really wonderful. One day it was "such a dear little roadside shrine" she had heard of as really remarkable if you looked into it, which they had not yet done; another, it was a picturesque old woman, of whom dear Lord Germistoun *must* make a drawing for *her*; or a church deserving of a similar distinction, or a tree, or a cow—no matter what the object, or how commonplace, for she always contrived to invest it with some imaginary interest which caused the pilgrimage to be made, and gave point to it. Then she would set Lord Germistoun to his task, and remain beside him, full of interest, query, and suggestion; while Tom and Esmè naturally moved about, or went away together to search, at her suggestion, for some mythical point of view affording scope for Esmè's sketching powers. The two young people soon got on terms of friendly intimacy; for Tom was extremely frank, cheery, and amusing, and Esmè's unconsciousness of the plot which circled round her was not disturbed by any aggressive action on his part. In fact, he was much more at ease with her in a *tête-à-tête* than when with the rest of the party, which, considering he was a suitor, was exactly what he ought not to have been; but, in truth, it was his sister's presence which mainly reminded him of the part he had undertaken to play. His state of mind about the whole matter was very ambiguous. He did not quite know *what* he wanted. He was perfectly certain, of course, that he would like Miss Douglas's fortune, and that the state of his affairs made such an acquisition desirable. Moreover, when his mind turned upon his financial troubles, it did, in some mysterious way, take comfort from feeling that there was, in *possible* reserve, this *possible* something—this off-chance—upon which he might *possibly* fall back, and perhaps successfully. But his heart was untouched; he had no turn for matrimony; he was sadly deficient in those arts which his sister believed him to be practising; and he shrunk from the disturbance and opposition which he knew must arise, even were he successful with the lady herself. So he drifted on, procrastinating and temporizing, forced to deceive his sister as to his real relations with Esmè, since a knowledge of them might probably have led her to throw up the game which he was not helping her to play, but which he could not bear to abandon, as a last resource, which might come in usefully some day or other.

Now and then, indeed, when the post had brought him some desperate menace from a creditor, and when his sister had improved the occasion with urgent rhetoric, he would make some quaint, spasmodic approaches to the subject with Esmè; but they were so clumsily made, and so adroitly withdrawn, that they passed altogether unobserved and unsuspected.

Mrs. Ravenhall, of course, catechised him often and searchingly; and since, to a certain extent, she regulated her tactics toward Esmè from the impressions she received from him, she was often in a state of mystification which gave rise to cross-purposes.

"Another day gone, Tom," she would say, "and what progress?"

"Well, it is difficult to say, Lucy."

"But *some*?"

"Oh yes, I think so."

"You are getting to like her very much?"

"Very much."

"Now, be frank with me; do you observe any change in her manner?"

"Ye-es, a decided change, I should say."

"Is it at all fluttery when you are left alone together, or when you meet?"

"Rather fluttery."

"And you adapt your manner, I hope?"

"Oh yes; I flutter too."

"Be serious. I sometimes think your manner is a little too familiar and easy. Avoid that. If you loved the dear girl as she ought to be loved, there would be no familiarity."

"Well, you know, we *are* getting pretty intimate; we couldn't well help it—thanks to your management."

"Ah! but you mustn't be intimate. Check that sort of thing at once. It kills sentiment. And there ought not to be too much conversation. It is, of course, unnecessary to say how fatal your ordinary style of rattle would be. If her manner is fluttery, the time for constrained silences ought to have arrived. Encourage them, by all means. Never interrupt them, except by an incoherency. Think of your debts—anything that will keep you quiet and sadden your face. By-the-bye, what do you talk about?"

"Oh, the usual thing."

"Do you mean what is usual between people who are falling in love with each other?"

"Of course."

"And what is that?"

This was a poser, but Tom brazened it out.

"Why, hang it, Lucy," he said, "you've been in love yourself, I suppose! at least you seem to know all about it; so surely you must understand what I mean."

"Well, perhaps. I can't say honestly, Tom, that I observe any symptoms in Miss Douglas."

"But you know how women dissemble before each other."

"True; and she has natural self-control. Her manner is, of course, *totally* different when you are by yourselves?"

"Oh! totally, totally;" which was so far true that on these occasions Tom was livelier and made her laugh more.

"Well, I hope things are progressing; but you mustn't lose time. I should say you might bring matters to a crisis within the month."

"Wouldn't that look rather bold and overconfident?"

"Delays are dangerous: if you don't, you must follow them to the Engadine."

"I was thinking it would be better to put it off till the end of my visit at Dumerlacht. There would be more delicacy in that, I think." What Tom *did* think was, that he would at least make a certainty of his shooting.

"If the state of her mind is what your account implies, it won't do to delay long."

"Oh, perhaps I am over-sanguine; possibly I exaggerate."

"Well, you must be guided by circumstances, and keep your eyes wide open. I wish Frank didn't abhor the old gentleman so dreadfully.

You can't conceive what difficulty I have in keeping him here. That is one reason why you should hasten matters. If *we* go, where will you be?"

"Where, indeed?" said Tom; but the ready answer suggested itself to his inner mind—"At Homburg within eight-and-forty hours."

Mrs. Ravenhall having thus put Tom through his facings, would occasionally go over to the other camp, and while she played a *coup* or two for her brother, endeavor, from the other point of view, to discover how the land lay. To Esmè she was in some respects incomprehensible—without the key to her plot it could hardly be otherwise, act she never so adroitly; but her un-failing geniality and kindness of manner were sufficiently attractive, and she was sure of a sincere welcome, on her frequent visits.

"Here is the tiresome, gossipy old woman coming again to worry and interrupt you, dear Miss Douglas!" she cried, as she entered Esmè's room, on one of these occasions, toward the close of the Cadenabbia campaign, and when Mrs. Ravenhall began to think that she must intervene more actively herself. "But I hope you are not too busy—I hope I am not too dreadfully in the way?"

Esmè reassured her on these heads, and she went on to propose the inevitable expedition; "But," she added, "it is not for a common reason I propose it to-day; and since Lord Germistoun is not busy—for he is walking on the pier—and since you are always so sweet and good, I am sure you will oblige me, if you can."

"Oblige, Mrs. Ravenhall! Of course I shall be delighted to go with you—I always am. Where do you think of going to?"

"Ah! I *have* got a little gem for Lord Germistoun, about five miles down, on the Chiavenna side. But, to be quite frank with you, I have a selfish object—yes, quite a selfish object—in proposing an excursion to-day. To tell you the truth, I am miserable about my brother Tom. He is so depressed and low. He will admit nothing; but I can't bear to see the dear fellow suffer. So I wish to distract him, if I can—to take him out of himself; and I think if we can get him to go with us, we cheerful people ought to be able to do him some good among us."

None of Love's ensigns displayed themselves in Esmè's face, but she expressed all due sympathy for Tom, and asked simply what was wrong. That, Mrs. Ravenhall said, was what she could not make out; but his depression had existed for some time, and was increasing; and probably Miss Douglas had noticed it? But Esmè could not say she had, by any manner of means. "He has given you no hint," said Mrs. Ravenhall, "that there is something preying on his mind, you are certain?"

"Most certain; and surely it is most unlikely he should have spoken to me about it."

"I don't know about that. I *do* know that he has a strong feeling of sympathy and *rapproch* with you; so I thought he *might* have made you his confidante, though he admits nothing to me. But he has said nothing?"

"Nothing. By-the-bye, he sometimes speaks with a good deal of anxiety about a horse which he is interested in, for some race; perhaps he has had some bad news about it."

Mrs. Ravenhall's face fell, and she replied, "Oh dear, no; he makes no secret to me of any

trouble of *that sort*. This is something far, far deeper." Furtively scanning Esmè's face as she spoke, and seeing no desired change in it, she said to herself, "If this is dissembling, she dissembles skilfully; and dissembling it must be, unless Tom is deceiving himself, which, in his calm state of mind, is not likely. Then she went on to say, confidentially, that they must extract Tom's secret from him, if possible. "You will help me, will you not, my dear Miss Douglas?"

"I? Oh, Mrs. Ravenhall, I don't see how I can possibly do that. I think it would be—"

Here Esmè paused, and Mrs. Ravenhall thought her manner and expression more satisfactory.

"At all events," she said, "you will help me to try and cheer him, I know."

The idea of that rattling talker and *farceur* requiring to be cheered made Esmè smile; but as he *might* be depressed in private—must be, indeed, or his sister could not be so concerned about him—she laughingly said that she would heartily co-operate. "I dare say," she added, "he is only bored. It must be dreadfully dull for any one of his tastes down here, with none of his usual pursuits, and no congenial companions. Probably the best advice we can give him is to go away."

"Probably," thought Mrs. Ravenhall, "this is a feeler."

But here she was rather in a logical difficulty; for, having just stated that Tom was excessively unhappy, it was hard to affirm (which she would have liked to imply) that all his happiness centred in Cadenabbia. She could not do this, or even throw out any broad innuendo as to the attractions which the place had for him, without showing her hand, which, sorely hampered as she was by her ignorance of the exact relations existing between Tom and Esmè, she could not venture to do. So she merely said, with some *intention*, that she felt certain "*that would not meet the difficulty, but, rather, aggravate it materially.*"

And then she went on in a side-strain, apropos of Esmè's allusions to Tom's tastes and pursuits, to suggest that, in reality, his soul soared above the vulgar pastimes of his coevals, to which he merely addicted himself from the disgust incidental to a *carrière manquée*; moreover, that the underlying vein of thoughtfulness and earnest feeling which he undoubtedly possessed was concealed by the *mauvaise honte* and artificial cynicism so constantly to be observed in the Anglo-Saxon when disappointed in his loftier aspirations. In fact, she gave quite a romantic color to Tom's pigeon-shooting, polo-playing, and race-frequenting propensities—winding up with a firmly expressed conviction that from them he might be satisfactorily retrieved by the *right influence*, if only it could be brought to bear upon him; for, "Ah, dear me," she concluded, with a deep sigh, "it doesn't bear thinking of! It is the sorrow of my life; and I *had* such hopes of him! We all had. Yet I can't bring myself to despair. No. I constantly say to myself, 'Under tender and noble influences, what might not that gifted creature do, even yet!' for he is full of heart and sympathy. Well, well; forgive me for boring you. Dear Tom is so very much to me, I forget myself when I begin to speak of him."

Mrs. Ravenhall did this passage excessively well, and Esmè's kind heart was touched for the

"sorrow of her life." It was impossible, indeed, that Esmè should not feel a little perplexed about this strangely unobtruded side of Tom's nature, but it could not be altogether imaginary; and, in any case, Mrs. Ravenhall's anguish was obviously sincere, and to be respected.

On the morning of this expedition the sorrowing sister had discovered her "gifted" brother gazing in some consternation at a sheaf of newly arrived duns, and had, then and there, well battered him with counsel, suggestion, and reproof as to the progress of his suit; and after the start, while the party were still together, she was so observant and manœuvring, and so plied Tom with secret telegraphy, that for once he really became conscious, constrained, and silent, thus favoring the recently coined theory of his depression. Then, when Mrs. Ravenhall's tactics had ripened for the separation of the party, she contrived to whisper Tom, before he and Esmè sauntered away. "Just continue as you are doing; be low, be depressed, but, at the right moment *empressé* and earnest. I have paved the way for you, I think." These words of wisdom Tom did not long bear in mind, but presently fell into such wild spirits, and rattled away so continuously, that Esmè, thinking partly of Mrs. Ravenhall's revelation, partly of Tom's recent eclipse, and having no reason for constraint with him, laughingly congratulated him on the recovery of his spirits. "Recovery of my spirits!" he cried, and then (remembering his sister's words, and suspecting some move of hers to which he ought to play up), "ah!—ahem! did you think I was out of spirits?"

"Oh yes; your gloom was quite tragical, and visible to every eye."

"Ah! perhaps; I didn't think it would be observed. I'm sorry it was. A man ought to conceal these things; to—to wear a mask, and that kind of thing."

"I think it is very hard, when one is really bored, to conceal the fact."

"Well, it is; but I ought to have concealed it."

"I was right, then; I knew I was. You are bored with this place, and I think it is very natural."

"Bored?" cried Tom, aghast at his clumsy *lapsus*, "of course I didn't mean that. I meant low, depressed."

"Which you are?"

"Yes, now—now you press me, I must admit that I am—horribly so."

"But yet not bored with this place?"

"No; I never was happier than I am here."

Esmè laughed. "What a very curious state of mind to be in!" she said.

"Isn't it?" said Tom.

"Horribly low and depressed, yet never happier—all at the same time?"

Tom was not so logical as his sister: besides, he had a dim notion that this was the normal phase of a lover's mind; so he stuck to his paradox, trying to look lugubrious, with fun threatening to break out in his eyes and all over his face.

"It is impossible, then, for your friends to know whether they ought to congratulate or condole," said Esmè, demurely, humoring his whim, and expecting a *dénouement* in connection with Tom's ever-execrated banker and some turn of fortune on the turf.

"Ah!" said Tom, "I wish I knew which they ought to do. No one could tell them except yourself."

Here he was, up at the very point, long before he meant it; whereupon, immediately, great consternation fell upon him, so that he swerved, and adroitly added, "Of course, I don't mean *you* specially, but you or some other tremendously clever person, who understands metaphysics and that kind of thing."

"Really, Mr. Wyedale, I wonder what you will credit me with next? Metaphysics! I don't think I even quite know what the word means."

"Oh, neither do I, for that matter; but it's a good big word, and means something wise."

Esmé laughed, and said, "Well, I don't think I need go very deep into metaphysics to discover what would be a remedy for that part of your state of mind which is not 'exquisitely happy.'"

"A remedy? What is it?"

"Some pigeons to shoot, for one thing."

"Well, the place would be more enduring—would be the better for something of the sort."

"Or a polo-ground."

"Ah! if we had some polo."

"Or a race-meeting, within reach, now and then."

"Don't tantalize me, Miss Douglas."

"And a few sympathetic men under sixty, to talk to and play tennis with."

"Oh yes; the men here *are* maddeningly old and stupid. They can do nothing. They break one's heart."

"Exactly; in other words, you are severely bored."

"No, no, no!"

"Oh yes, you are; and, strange to say, I can suggest an alleviation to you, which I don't think you have discovered for yourself. Giuseppe, our chief boatman, tells me there is splendid sport to be got here in spearing trout at night in the lake—what they call 'burning the water' in Scotland."

"You don't say so!"

"Giuseppe does."

"And—and large trout?"

"Gigantic, according to Giuseppe."

"And how do they work it?"

"Ah! I must refer you to Giuseppe for the particulars."

"I can't tell you, Miss Douglas, how much obliged I am for the hint. I'll get at Giuseppe this very afternoon. I'll try conclusions with the trout before I'm a day older. There's really no sport much better. That *will* be something to do at last." And so, forgetting his sister, matrimony, depression, and all the real business of the hour, he rattled away upon the intoxicating subject, till, coming abruptly upon the rest of the party, he stopped short and pulled so long a face—remembering how hopelessly he had broken down in his duty, how far he had wandered from the prescribed path—that his sister almost feared she read in his guilty features the announcement of his rejection.

From all this it will be seen how little Esmé's unconsciousness was to be wondered at; what a waste of power was involved in poor Mrs. Ravenhall's sleepless exertions; with what poetic justice nature, working through Tom's natural instincts, buried her intrigues, for the present at least, in bathos; and how little cause, for the

present at least, Cosmo Glencairn had to torture himself, as he often did, about the rival who had communicated his designs with such offensive nonchalance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE month drew to a close at last, and Mrs. Ravenhall had the mortification of feeling that the campaign in which she had displayed so much strategy was perhaps, at best, only a drawn one. Misrepresent as he might, Tom could not point to a single position of advantage which had been gained. He could only keep on reporting, like the telegrams from despairing armies, "The morale of the troops is excellent," "The situation is easier," "The definitive blow is postponed for strategic reasons," and so forth. All was cruelly vague and unsatisfactory; and from the opposite side no cheering symptoms came to the anxious eye of her who conducted the siege operations. It was hard to draw off now—with nothing to look forward to but a renewal of the campaign in a new field, under circumstances that could scarcely be so favorable, and when her own supervision might not be available.

She was at her wits' end about Tom. She wished him to go on to the Engadine, and at least preserve the *status quo*; but Tom was obstinate. He wanted a rest, a change from this *toujours perdrix* of ladies' society, polite small-talk, boredom, dissimulation, and physical inactivity. But he put it otherwise to his sister, asserting (and this reasonably) that in her absence the field would not be conveniently open to him; also, that a little absence often did good—making the heart (as he was instructed) grow fonder; and, lastly, that he had a presentiment that the thing would be done at Dunerlacht, and nowhere else. It was hard, he added, to fight against a presentiment—which Mrs. Ravenhall felt to be true, when, as, in this case, it merely signifies an obstinate resolve; so she was reluctantly obliged to give way before it. And what was Tom going to do now? Tom's heart was already beating high with the thought of Homburg. The siren-song of "Faites le jeu," the "innumerable" cringing of *billets de banque*, the diapason of shovelled gold, were sounding in the ear of his fancy; but it was part of the matrimonial scheme that he was to appear *rangé*—so he said he required bracing, and would go to bathe at Biarritz or Ostend for a month. In this melancholy way matters stood, when, two days before the break-up of the party, Mr. Ravenhall, who had been detrimental all along, at last came in useful; for his wife, on returning from a long excursion that afternoon, found him in a high state of fuss—his portmanteaus packed and in the hall, and he himself fuming at the non-arrival of the steamer which was to convey him on the first stage of his journey to London. Mr. Ravenhall, be it known, had come away from Parliament without "a pair," and on that very forenoon he had received telegram after telegram from Hustler the Whip, imploring him, in agitated terms, to return on the instant; for two nights thereafter, the opposition—"strong, united, and jubilant"—were going to "try a fall" with the ministry, which was shaky and despondent, and required every vote

which could be scraped together, if it were to be saved at all.

"So I am off, of course," said Ravenhall, "to save ministers."

"And what am I to do?" asked his wife.

Mr. R. had not given her a thought; but, as he rushed to the steamer which now came up, he said that she might do what she liked—that was to say, come home at her leisure, securing the escort of Tom; and so went on his way.

What, then, was she to do? It was grievous to miss a season; but to go back to London when two-thirds of it was over, to set the machinery of season-life agoing when the rest of the world were beginning to think of the wind-up, was by no means remunerative; and, in this case, there was a special reason against it. Her resolution was taken at once. She would "go home by the Engadine," with Tom as escort, and linger as long upon the way as seemed advisable. Had not Ravenhall given her *carte blanche*? Without a word, therefore, to Tom, she went straight to the Villa Bianca; and relating how her husband had been suddenly called home on "urgent business," she explained her new plan, which she thought would be quite delightful, were she only convinced that the prospect of her continued society would not be irksome to the Germistounes. Nothing could be more flattering than their response to this: and what, they asked, of Tom? Tom, his sister said, would accompany her; it would be a *delight* to him; the *poor fellow* had been quite *dismally low* about the break-up of their *charming little coterie*! And when Tom's accession had been also hailed with kindly acclamations, she went into the plans for the journey; and in a few minutes it was arranged that they should travel together, and, "to prolong the enjoyment, and make quite a picnic of it," start for Chiavenna on the following afternoon, sleep there, and make their way over the Maloya Pass next day. With all details cut and dried, Mrs. Ravenhall then sought her brother, to communicate what she called this "rare stroke of fortune." Strange to say, the "poor fellow" heard of Fortune's bounty in a spirit of utter thanklessness; for he fell into a violent passion, and protested, in most unlover-like language, against being "swindled" into further association with the *objet aimé* for the present.

"But," urged his sister, "they are so pleased you are coming—quite in ecstasies."

"Gammon!" cried Tom, whose faith in "ecstasies" the events of the month had crushed—"ecstasies be hanged! They are thrown away, at all events, for I'm not going. There!"

"Now, Tom, do be reasonable."

"No, I won't. I've been in the mill long enough. I'm off to Ho—to Biarritz. I require bracing. Health before every consideration."

"But what am I to say to them?"

"Exactly what you please."

"But I've pledged you."

"That is your affair."

"And who is to take care of me?"

"Again your affair."

"And all our schemes?"

"All *your* schemes may slide. I'm dead tired of them."

Here was ingratitude, base and brutal; but Mrs. Ravenhall knew that Tom's wrath was ever

evanescent, and his nature kindly—so she turned away very silently to the window, applied her pocket-handkerchief very furtively to her eyes, and gave a *very* little sob. There was pathos in the silence, and dramatic power in the suppression of the tear and the sob. Few men—not brutal—can resist this sort of thing: Tom was beat at once. "Come, Lucy," he said, "I didn't mean to be so harsh; but it is hard on a fellow; admit that."

"A great deal harder upon me," replied Mrs. Ravenhall, with her back still turned and a *tremolo* in her voice. "See what I've been doing and sacrificing for you, and this unkindness the only return!"

"Well, I am a brute, but I'm sorry for it."

"And you'll go?"

Tom had felt from the first that this was a foregone conclusion; but he replied, "If there is no help for it," adding, with a sudden flash of the predatory instinct, "if I can *get*, that is to say; for, unless you pay my hotel bill, I'm afraid the manager may be rather pressing in his invitation to remain."

His sister reassured him on this head, and pointed out that, when such a stake was at issue, a little money was of no consideration. This healthy financial sentiment opened up to Tom a new field of auriferous possibilities, which helped to console him, though he continued all day sufficiently "low" and "depressed" to have covered himself with distinction in the most protracted "love" scene with Esmè.

The next afternoon saw them on board the steamer for Colico. Lord Germistoun and his daughter were very sorry to go; and the retainers of the villa seemed very sorry to part with them, thronging to the pier with bouquets and benedictions, and breaking out into a choric song of love, admiration, and regret as the vessel moved away. This, as the words of their little hymn implied, was a tribute to the sweet English girl whose gracious ways and fair Madonna face had captivated the simple folk. His lordship, however, took it all as for himself, stiffly raised his hat, and observed to a by-stander that he was gratified; also that these were a goodish kind of poor devils, who lied and thieved like fury, but had an eye for a gentleman when they saw him, and knew how to treat him. Mrs. Ravenhall was only too thankful to turn her back upon the lake; but she was still "before the foot-lights:" so when they left it and drove away to Chiavenna, she kissed her hand sentimentally to the last of it, and murmured, "Lago mio! mio bel lago, addio! Ci bisogna partire! ma i nostri cuori staranno sempre con te!"

And Lord Germistoun, gallantly affecting to catch her enthusiasm, waved his hat in the same direction, and cried in the same melodious tongue, "Addio, bel lago! La signora sene vada, e con lei tu perdi la tua più cara bellezza!"

And Esmè laughed and said,

"Al rivederti, bel lago!"

And so they all said "good-bye" to the lake in its native language—all except Tom, by-the-bye, who was still "low," and who said nothing, but looked as if he never wished to see its waters again; and so the curtain fell upon beautiful Como.

Pleasant is the route through the Val Brega-

glia, by which Italy speeds her parting guests, and sends them upward from her summery plains to the solemn haunts of winter. Upon the massive crags that overhang the way, the South still spreads her mantle of deepest foliage, whose exquisite verdure is blended from the green of the chestnut, the walnut, and the oak. Thickets of shrubby clothe the levels in dark luxuriance, relieved with flashes from the rhododendron's bloom; there are glimpses of sward still enamelled with souvenirs of the Land of Flowers; even the boulders which have tumbled to the river-side have brought their gala covering of wondrous mosses, purple, amber—a wealth of indefinable color—which tells no tale of winter. The Maira, fresh from some glacier up above, meets the tender grasses and the flowers upon her margin, and checks her haste. It is still the Land of Summer, and the Val Bregaglia will summer it with every art, as long as may be.

But we go on and up. Here is Castegna, and we are across the frontier. Farewell to Italy! On we go and up, through gradual transformations. We begin to miss the walnut leaf; we lose the chestnut; we pass through galleries of unclothed rock. Over the dark crests of pine and alpine cedar, flashes from sunlit snow-peaks begin to reach us. The Maira is a torrent now, sometimes a water-fall. The alpen-rose and heather nestle on her rough banks; the mountain-ash trembles over her angry tumult. On we go and up, with a sudden steepness of ascent. Suddenly a mist falls around us—a cloud. We hear the jingling of the horses' bells and the roar of a water-fall; we feel by the angle of the carriage that the gradient increases; and though we can see nothing, we know that we are breasting the western face of the Maloya. The mist lifts, and, behind, we have a dream-like glimpse of far-away plains sleeping in the sun—Elysian—beautiful exceedingly; and below us, in the foreground, a deep, dark, piny gorge, whence, in a ghostly column, the spray of a cascade rises up, quivering with the voice of its hidden waters. Down comes the mist again; nor does it rise till, the horses springing forward in their supreme effort, we suddenly find ourselves upon the level, and everything is clear again. We are in the Engadine. We stand on the edge of an upper mountain-world—on a plateau six thousand feet in height, where the great mountain-peaks separate themselves at last from the family chain, and, rising up to heaven in sublime loneliness, assert their magnificent individuality.

By this route, and with some such experiences, the combined party made their way from Chiavenna to Maloya, much favored by the weather. Then, after a brief halt, they continued their journey to St. Moritz, through the unexpected green pastures and by the blue waters of the Upper Engadine, where everything is so unexpected and strange; where the air is so still and the woods so songless, and everything wears such an impress of solemn pensiveness, it would seem as though some awe from the near presence of the mighty hills saddened the valley, or the weight of their pine-clad feet oppressed it with too sore a burden. The day was waning when they started from Maloya, and when they left the Silser-see the sun's last rays died on its quiet surface. Up in mid-heaven the rose light still bloomed on the peaks of the Julier and Bernina; but twilight

deepened apace as they drove swiftly down the valley, so that when they reached Camper the last of the after-glow was fading from Piz Languard, and they entered St. Moritz in the dark.

Up to a certain point things had gone most satisfactorily *en route*. Tom had rather a bad time of it, to be sure; for whenever Esmè remarked on anything in the shape of a plant or a flower by the wayside, his sister finding telegraphic measures vain, frankly ordered him to descend and secure the specimen; and as Esmè's botanical sympathies were quick and wide, his exits and entrances, notwithstanding her protests, were incessant. Nor, when he had half filled the carriage, and escaped to the *banquette* under plea of smoke, did he find sanctuary there, being perpetually harassed by his sister's parasol arousing him to some bit of scenery which Esmè admired, and which he was consequently assured was "quite in his style." There is a good deal of labor and sorrow in the conduct of a courtship at best, when all the *petits soins* are inspired by the heart of the suitor, and Tom often felt that this "machine-made" wooing was becoming perfectly intolerable; and over and over again, on this day, he bitterly compared himself to a barrel-organ, whereof the grinder was Lucy, who, with no fear of the police before her eyes, was grinding his works to destruction.

Lord Germistounne had begun the morning "gouty," by which euphemism (strongly recommended for use in families) he described a general fractiousness of temper and desire to put every one else in the wrong; so that the prospect of the journey was not lively. But suddenly remembering that he had unlawfully partaken of Chiavenna beer the night before, and deciding that Stefano, the courier, was in some mysterious way responsible for this infraction of medical ordinance and his master's *malaise*, he packed his "gout" neatly up in half a dozen sentences of malediction, flung them on his scape-goat's back, consigned him to the arch-brewer of all mischief, and, thus relieved, became as pleasant and ungouty as need be. Nothing could be neater than his gallant little speeches to Mrs. Ravenhall, or more graceful than his patronage of the scenery, or apter than his remarks, botanical and geological—nothing, at least, according to Mrs. Ravenhall, and even Tom (when not engaged in rooting up something tough and bulbous by the roadside), for Tom was still the faithful *claqueur* of the proprietor of the "best mixed shooting in Scotland." And then, his lordship's anecdotes! so racy! so full of sarcasm! so interesting! If they were old, they were "historically instructive;" if their satire clang, like yew's roots, round dead men's bones—well, it served the bones right; for Lord Germistounne was great, and wise, and infallible—when Mrs. Ravenhall was his prophet. So things went cheerily and well, till they were more than two-thirds up the pass. But neither the temper of a gouty noble nor the weather of an Alpine pass can be depended upon. A little thing will disturb the equilibrium of either. It became suddenly rather chilly, and there was a check in the flow of Lord Germistounne's converse. A haze came over the sun; it became chillier. Lord Germistounne began to look a little dangerous—to put his ears back, as it were. Symptoms of an impending mist showed themselves; Lord Germistounne shivered and

grily, and was pulling his plaid tighter round him, when his arms dropped, and, glaring with all his eyes at the second carriage which followed close behind, he almost screamed,

"By heavens! the sound is actually *drinking* before me—*me!*—in my very face!"

And there, sure enough, was Stefano, seated in the *banquette*, positively refreshing his inner man from a flask, in the august presence of his employer! "A d—d low Neapolitan lazzarone" drinking (with gusto too!) "in the whites of the eyes" of the Right Hon. Archibald, Viscount Germistounne, Baron Dnnerlacht, K.T., and a Baronet! If ever there were a provocative to "gout," here surely it was. His lordship succumbed to it instantly. The *cortège* was halted on the edge of the precipice with some difficulty, and even peril; and the courier, being extracted from his perch, was "brought up," and received such a *warming* about "roistering ruffianism," and "brutal, mutinous insolence," as would have closed the mouth of a timid courier against *schnaps* for the remainder of his days. Then the flask was confiscated, and its contents poured as a libation to the infernal gods, whom Lord Germistounne had continuously invoked during the "incident."

But this time the ebullition brought no relief; the scape-goat went in vain to the wilderness, and Mrs. Ravenhall's blandishments fell flat; for the mist swooped down and wrapped them in its cold, wet blanket, so that the thin blood of the old man had need of all the fire of his anger to keep it on the move at all. There was, fortunately, no lack of this stimulant. If Sir William Gull had, with devilish art, concocted "this accursed cloud," and conveyed it through the air, and caused it to drop on the Maloya Pass, so as to meet his noble patient there, he could not have been held more personally responsible for its existence. Awful superlatives were tacked to the doctor's name, about which his lordship even condescended to the vulgarity of a ferocious jest, averring that the eminent man might justly adopt the habit of the clan patriarchs, and bestow it on his Engadine followers, who had fully earned the distinction. Even Alderman Rabbits came in—as a sort of accessory—for the tail of the storm, and the most ungenerous strictures were passed upon his interior. Nor did matters greatly improve when they emerged from the cloud and found themselves upon the plateau of the Engadine. The whole thing was pronounced to be a mistake, if not a swindle; the air would give a seal bronchitis; the levels about the river and lakes looked malarious enough to kill herds of the strongest elephants. Scenery? there was no scenery; it was an infernal desert invented by the doctors as a sort of theatre for empirical practice. "Let them," he cried, "make their experiments on aldermen if they please; they may vivisect Sir Peter Rabbits if they choose—probably they couldn't do better; but it's monstrous that a really valuable life should be tampered with by the scoundrels." He was in the state of mind which prompts the "Tax-payer" to write to *The Times*; and perhaps he might have done so had it not been the habit of the "tax-payer," and if he had not regarded *l'organe de la cité* as the root of all national evil.

Few places in Europe are more loved by its visitors than the Engadine, many of whom re-

gard it with a kind of bigoted enthusiasm which will scarcely allow that there can be any qualification of the praises due to it; but even these will, *perhaps*, admit that, at first (*only* at first), there is a certain dishevelledness—a general happy-go-luckiness—about the hotels, to which one requires to get accustomed. At all events, they will be quite able to conceive that a man arriving in the dark, and in Lord Germistounne's frame of mind, might very probably not be soothed by his first impressions even of the Hotel "Zur frohen Aussicht" at St. Moritz.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was dark when the party arrived. All the guest-world were at "evening-meal," and all (the few) waiters were feeding them—the porter even assisting. Thus, when the Germistounne equipage clattered up, there was none of that rush and *élan* of welcome which, at smaller altitudes, greet parties less illustrious. All the shouting, and jingling, and cracking of whips was met with a bathos of darkness and silence. Only after a very prolonged ringing did a leisurely form, with a shaggy head, and its hands very deep in its pockets, lounge to the door. This was the landlord himself, at that time a worthy Switzer, with the fear of God, perhaps, but certainly not that of man, before his eyes; and who—being a republican, or rather because his hotel was always full, and because a contract price is equally valuable, be it paid by peer or proletarian—had no sort of leaning to a lord, but rather contrariwise—the servants of the noble being often troublesome. This individual, then, remained at the top of the steps, leaning against the door-post, and making no sign whatever.

"What does it mean? what the devil does it all mean?" shouted Lord Germistounne. "Where are the people? the servants? the landlord? the—speak to that man, Stefano! speak to him—if he is a man!" Stefano reascended the steps, and a low, sleepy, growling sound ensued, on the part of the man, which was presently interpreted to his master by Stefano, to the effect that the growler was a man, that he was also the landlord, and that he too wished very much to know "what it all meant."

"Tell him," cried Lord Germistounne—"tell the idiot that we want rooms, and our luggage taken down, and—and what people usually want at hotels."

"Tell him," replied the growler, "that he can't have rooms here."

"Then I'll go straight to the mayor!" shouted his lordship, springing to his feet. Whereupon the growler announced that *he* was the mayor, and ready for him and all comers. "Then, by the Lord Harry, I'll go to the president of the district, wherever he is!" But there was no checkmating the monster—he was also president of the district! Great heavens! here was a pretty pass! Lord Germistounne had got beyond the law, or rather he found all its machinery concentrated in the hands of a brutal pluralist, who would certainly not use it against himself. What was to be done? All kinds of vituperation and menace fell upon the growler as spray upon an iron-bound coast. Eventually,

in some of his capacities, he might probably lock his lordship up for inciting to a breach of the peace; in the mean time, he rather seemed to enjoy the fun of the thing in a dim, ruminating way.

Things were in this state of dead-lock when a smart and intelligent young woman, who proved to be the landlord's daughter, appeared on the scene, and who, receiving nothing from her father but an unintelligible grunt in answer to her inquiries, tripped impatiently down to the carriage, and asked the pleasure of the party, and their names; on hearing which she gave a cry of astonishment, assured them their rooms were reserved and ready, rushed up-stairs, tolled the bell, dashed into the house, cried shrilly for the attendants, and, when she had put everything in train, turned upon her father sharply, and asked him, as Lord G. had done, "What it all meant?" To which, in the same grim monotone, he simply replied, "They didn't tell me their names. They only said they wanted rooms. Am I a prophet?"

And this is the kind of thing that did, and may perhaps still, occur in the Engadine; but, after all, it is only the people's way—only their way—which, of course, makes it as right and pleasant as possible. The poor old lord was really quite crushed by this last scene. The terrible immobility of the landlord had been too much for him, after the trials and fatigues of the day; and he went to bed entirely subdued, and without a word of bitterness, save the remark that an egg, which he had encountered at supper, was sufficient to "account for everything—almost everything;" the exceptions being, perhaps, the mysterious clemency of Providence, which could permit the continued existence of the growler and the savagery of a political system which could place him in a double-seated curule chair.

The Engadine, as has been said, enjoys an affection on the part of its visitors which is quite enthusiastic. Some give all their love to Pontresina, others to St. Moritz, others to Campfer, others (the sybarites) to Samaden; and, among the partisans of each, there is often hot contention and dispute. Yet, as against an outsider, all true Engadiners will sink minor differences, and "go for" the Engadine, the whole Engadine, and—it would almost sometimes seem—for nothing but the Engadine. Well, it cannot be said that their enthusiasm is much misapplied, for it is a goodly and a glorious region, Lord Germistoun's first impressions notwithstanding. The air alone makes the region unique. Is there anything like it anywhere else? so dry, elastic, and champagney? The *genius loci* may be solemn and pensive, but we laugh at him; we defy his contagion, breathing this brave atmosphere in the brave summer-time. You seek delight in the glories of nature, in vast expanses of mountain panorama, in the splendors that dwell about the world of snow-field and glacier? Elsewhere you may purchase fleeting glimpses of these, with toil and weariness of the flesh. But here, at ease, on a high green oasis, in the midst of the glittering ice-world, you can watch, like a lotus-eater, the restless phenomena of light and color, which dream over it in tender ripples, or surge across it in gorgeous floods, incessantly, from the first streak of dawn till the after-glow has faded from

the tallest summits. And here, without effort to distress the feeblest, you can reach points where all the Alpine world lies before you—all the giants of near and far, from the Tyrol to the Oberland, from Palù to Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn. And if you are muscular and ambitious, and wish to enjoy, with vast ranges of vision, the "swagger" of braving crevasse and avalanche, *circumspice*! many of the highest and severest mountains in Europe are beside you; you are half-way up them all, and thus can achieve your objects and earn glory at, so to speak, half-price. Here, then, living in neighborly intimacy with mountains and glaciers, young, old, lusty, feeble, athlete, and sybarite, can all taste the best delights of the high mountain life, each in his own way and degree. Yes, it is a goodly place. The splendid air, the noble scenery, the sound sleep, the conscious bound into a new vitality, after the languor of the plains—all these things are good; but, behind these positive delights, a negative advantage gives them exquisite point—there are no tourists here. The tidal wave of noisy vulgarity and brutal selfishness which swamps Europe, "affronts" the desert, and "puts a girdle round the earth," does not rise to these altitudes. We are beyond the zone of Cook and Gaze. Let us not pause to consider how it is so. Let us speak with bated breath, lest Jones and Robinson reflect, and mischief rise in the heart of Brown. Let us be simply thankful for the mystery, that in these pleasant places they are not.

It might have been expected that Lord Germistoun would not remain to appreciate the delights of the locality, and that earliest dawn would see him and his suite flying in the direction of monarchical institutions. But, strange to say, when he came down in the morning, whether it was the magic of the air already, or of a wonderfully sound sleep, or what not, his tone was temperate in the extreme. "We must try the place for a day or two, at all events," he said. He did not even allude to the landlord. Indeed, the relations between these two remarkable men were very singular from first to last. Manœuvres were of course resorted to, to keep them apart. Still, Lord Germistoun could not be kept from going occasionally for his letters to the bureau, in a corner of which the landlord was habitually ambushed; thus they would meet from time to time. Could it be that the imperviousness of this republican pachyderm to Lord Germistoun's wrath and general augustness paralyzed the latter by its utter novelty, and so quelled him? Certain it is that no further "scenes" occurred between them.

As soon as his lordship's eye fell upon the landlord, his back would stiffen, his nostrils dilate, and he would breathe short. As soon as the landlord beheld his lordship, he would rise slowly from his chair, with his back very much in the air, and his hands very deep in his pockets, and his eyes very much fixed upon the noble lord, and thus remain—alert, and, as it were, ready to spring—until the latter marched warily out of the room, with the cautious dignity of a large dog retiring from the presence of another large dog who looks as if he "meant business."

But the existence of the landlord did no particular harm. The place was tried for a few days, and it suited. The air and the waters were

all that could be desired; the hotel was comfortable; the food was respectable; my lord's appetite immense. There was no talk of moving. Gull was rehabilitated, and the name of Rabbits was not heard any more.

As yet there were few English in the place; but the foreign visitors were plentiful, pleasant, and *comme il faut*. There was a charming contingent of high-bred Italians at the hotel, and some official Prussians—all padding and bureaucratic *morgue*, but of much distinction; and several Russian princes and princesses, with that duplex air of pleasure above and plot below—which, by-the-bye, is not likely to be so effective hereafter as heretofore; and, among all these, there were several persons of real eminence in the world of statecraft, diplomacy, and fashion. At once Mrs. Ravenhall let loose all her tentacles into this shoal of eligibles, and had captured at least half a dozen distinguished "friendships" in a week. Poor woman! after all her vicarious love-making, she had certainly earned some relaxation. Who could grudge it to her? And here it was for her, as she best loved to take it. Lord Germistoun, too, was pleased with the society, particularly with its diplomatic and political elements; and the society received him with distinguished consideration.

He was always fond of political talk, and it was his foible to believe that he understood the foreign policies of all nations—even of England. So he posed as a statesman here, and harangued at large, occasionally being kind enough to explain the drift of treaties and memorandums to the men who had devised them. "I have been a minister myself," he said, and they all called him "Excellency." One observes that people with far fewer advantages—with less voice, less presence, less money—will always find a gallery for their prose and their platitudes if they only assert themselves; and Lord Germistoun was quite the centre of a little peripatetic *salon* down at the Kurhaus, of mornings. There he walked about, dropping words of wisdom, in the intervals between the prescribed tumbler. The air about him was foggy with turgid sentences, of which one continually caught such fragments as, "I told Beust very distinctly that I could not sanction—" "Cavour, who was a charlatan, implored me—" "Buol knew what my distinct opinion of *his* policy was—" "Louis Napoleon frequented my society at that time, and took my advice; if he had continued to do so—" etc., etc. People listened to all this respectfully; how much they swallowed is another question. "Que diable!" said Prince Latschki to an American friend, "I have turn that old man inside out in five minute. It is a shell! Void! Pah!"

It is probable that Latschki expressed a pretty general sentiment, but it was certainly not the sentiment which met his lordship's ears and eyes; and he was delighted with every one, especially with himself. Mrs. Ravenhall's "weather eye" was, notwithstanding other allurements, by no means neglectful of the young people. The Engadine seemed full of promise for her projects, at first. Here there was no call to rack the brain in devising expeditions, and excuses for them. There was something of the sort to be done every day in the week, without apology, and, indeed, almost *de rigueur*. These excursions are usually made in large parties, involv-

ing many vehicles, so that a very little generalship enabled her to make such travelling combinations as suited all her purposes. To one carriage she would invariably "detail" herself and Lord Germistoun, with some gentleman who would amuse and flatter him; and, for fourth, the lady of distinction whose "friendship" she happened to be *stalking* at the time. In another conveyance Esme and Tom would find themselves *vis-à-vis* with a neutral matron and some strangely unattractive old man—generally Schnoll, the German publicist, a dungeon of learning perfumed with garlic—or Angus Slorach, the Edinburgh metaphysician, who had one eye, reckless ways of snuffing, and an intolerable fund of anecdote about the late Dr. Chalmers. Tom sometimes grew restive about these old men, inquiring bitterly *who* on earth the late Dr. Chalmers was, and *why* on earth he should be disinterred for his benefit.

Things, however, seemed to go along pretty satisfactorily. Tom's occasional bulletins were as rosy as need be; and being, from various reasons, less searchingly verified than hitherto, they passed muster, and Mrs. Ravenhall was tolerably content for a time. But matters changed. For it chanced that there was in the hotel a certain young Count Roderigo Fori, of monstrous fascinations, with large, lustrous, and tender brown eyes, and a tenor voice that had simply no right to be off the stage; a youth, indeed, "framed in the very prodigality of nature," and dressed by Poole; and this splendid creature, who had no doubt desolated many female hearts before, introduced grievous care and agitation into the soul of Mrs. Ravenhall. And it also chanced that there was sojourning there a certain young American damsel—not beautiful, as it is the delightful habit of her young *compatriotes* to be, but endowed with that kind of wit and *espièglerie* which is calculated to fascinate that kind of young bachelor who, as a rule, sharpens his face against female allurements. And this Miss Krupper—in full, Eudoxia G. Krupper—to whom Mrs. Ravenhall had never done any harm, beyond never looking at her, yet cast upon that lady the curse of the sleepless eye. For, if the alluring count had only had the sense to fall in love with Miss Krupper, all might have been well; or if Miss Krupper had followed her national instinct in favour of a coronet (even when it only exists in the imagination of the nobleman or on his cigar-case and pocket-handkerchiefs), and cast her glamour over Count Roderigo, things might still have been supportable. But this regrettable count fell desperately in love, or seemed—for these Italians are nice, but—well, fell in love with Esme; and "that impossible" Miss Krupper fell in love with, or at least did her best to throw glamour over, Tom Wyedale. And these two tragical threads of circumstance interweaving, presented themselves almost simultaneously to the observation of Mrs. Ravenhall, and wrought her woe.

The party in the hotel spent their evenings together in the common drawing-room—for they were, on the whole, of the same *monde* (except, perhaps, Miss K. and her mamma); and, since there were many Italians among them, much music was made. Roderigo was the musical star, for his playing on guitar and piano was worthy of his performances as a tenor; and he had such a dramatic method of singing and

playing—such a way, as he sung, of fixing his beautiful eyes, with passionate intensity, on some inanimate object, and then gradually shifting his gaze to the face of some pretty woman, on whom it would rest in pathetic dreaminess during his tenderest phrases—that he was justly the object of admiration, and in perpetual requisition, particularly among the pretty women, of whom there was abundance. Esmè's singing was also justly admired; but since her playing was unequal to it, what more natural than that so apt an accompanier as the count should be ever ready to assist her? And thus they were brought together, and Roderigo very soon began to favor Esmè with a monopoly of the dreamy gazings above recorded.

About the same time, the charming young man developed a strong partiality for Tom's society, frequenting it so assiduously that where Tom was, there, too, generally, was the count, or thereabouts. Thus Mrs. Ravenhall's scheming in favor of her brother had a reflex action in favor of his new friend, who was almost as much in Esmè's society as was Tom—except, indeed, when the latter shared the happiness with Herr Schnoll or Dr. Slorach. But let us be just. The count's affection for his English friend must have been, in part at least, independent of the *arrière-pensée* of access to Miss Douglas. Otherwise why should he have invited him, night after night, to his rooms, when all the world slept? He certainly did so, and Tom as certainly went; and, since it would have been but dull work for two young fellows to sit doing nothing, could anything be more natural than that they should trifle with a pack of cards? And although the count was (he said) a perfect noodle at *écarté*, could anything be more in keeping with a chivalrous nature than that he should hospitably engage his guest in a game to which he was partial, being, indeed, favorably known in connection with it at "The Turf" and similar literary institutions? And if he won? Well, chivalrous conduct *sometimes* has its reward, and the battle is not *always* to the strong; so that Mrs. Ravenhall need not have been so very bitter against Roderigo apropos of his little *soirées*—all about a trumpery three hundred sovereigns too! which paltry sum she had to pay for Tom in a fortnight—Tom having "no effects," and debts of honor being "the very devil." Mrs. Ravenhall was perfectly blind to the romantic element in the incident, and thought, and said, quite dreadful things about the amiable young nobleman.

This, however, was comparatively a trifle. The count's daylight conduct became markedly aggressive. Fellows of this sort are no laggards. At all the excursions, he was at Esmè's side from the moment of debarkation, fetching and carrying, bounding up steep rocks for flowers and what not; anticipating every want; prostrating, worshipping, wriggling like a spaniel, with the eternal look of a spaniel's devotion in his beautiful brown eyes. Every night, at music, the *intention* of his singing and his dreamy gaze became more pronounced. One night the wretch even ventured on a serenade with his guitar: but here justice overtook him; for mistaking Lord Germinstoune's chamber for Esmè's "bower," he had not achieved the second verse of "Com' è gentil" before the window was thrown up, and he was ordered, in the most unfeeling terms, to stop

"that infernal caterwauling, and be off about his business."

Another day, Esmè having remarked at dinner that she did not possess a specimen of the *edelweiss*, at breakfast-time next morning she found a bouquet of the same upon her plate, with the legend attached to it in Italian, "A PRESENT FROM THE DAWN! CULLED THIS MORNING AT 11,000 FEET ABOVE THE SEA BY FORI." Dr. Slorach swore to several people who had observed the tender incident that he had seen the "whupper-snapper" buy it in the market-place ten minutes before, and was in a mind to expose the imposture; but he didn't; so that the imaginative count scored the feat to his credit. All these extravagances of worship were lost upon their object. Esmè admired the young man's singing, and thought him very good-natured, but supremely ridiculous, and treated his arts of devotion as the mere stock in trade of an Italian youth of artistic proclivities. Don't let the profane thought that she flirted with him enter any one's mind. Any repudiation of the sort on her behalf is indeed unnecessary; for it is obvious that the smallest sign from her would have brought the count to a prompt declaration. Between the tender thought and the earnest glance and the burning word, there are but short intervals with combustible gentry of the Fori type.

The ordinary "Mees Anglaise" might—probably must—have succumbed at once to his wiles and graces; but Esmè was not an ordinary "Mees Anglaise"—which, of course, Mrs. Ravenhall knew; still, she could not know how completely the count, so to speak, missed fire. Great, therefore, was her dismay. That wretch Tom could not be roused by her to a sense of the peril. "Do you wish me," he asked, "to shoot the fellow before he has given me my revenge and you have got back your money?" and, instead of being alarmed, went and straightway fell into the toils of E. G. Krupper, and flirted with her—for he *could* flirt with a certain kind of females who amused him and took all the trouble off his hands—and was seen lurking with her in the veranda at the back of the hotel, and on the terrace, in the suggestive gloaming; where Mrs. Ravenhall, with her own ears, overheard "the artful mix" confide to Tom that she had eight thousand a year!—"what they *always* say," Mrs. Ravenhall afterward assured Tom, "and which *always* turns out to mean, in green-backed dollars, worth about sixpence apiece or so. So don't you go and add madness to folly." Tom, too, addicted himself yet the more to the society of his friend the count; and, instead of manœuvring against him, seemed to be forever playing his game. The thing could not go on long. Mrs. Ravenhall was getting quite thin, and had no heart for her own little pursuits.

But the crisis came. A party was organized for the Morteratsch glacier. Tom and Esmè were, as usual, to share a carriage with the metaphysician and the old Baroness Blinkenschwag. But, by the fiendish arts of Miss Krupper and Roderigo working upon, and through, Tom, the plan was upset. The doctor and the baroness were beguiled and diverted to alien vehicles, and Esmè found herself driven rapidly off with the three conspirators, unchaperoned, before there was time for inquiry or remonstrance. They were ahead of the rest of the party: and when Mrs.

Ravenhall arrived at the scene of the picnic, the spectacle which met her eye was, Tom and Eudoxia huddled together, like a pair of lover-birds, and sharing one plaid (for your glacier gives a chill to the air); and, at a little distance, the count, posed as William Tell, on the edge of the ice-cataract, and singing divinely to a group of maidens below, in the centre of whom was Esmè, focused, of course, by the dreamy gaze of the songster.

This was altogether too much. The cup ran over. Mrs. Ravenhall resolved now to make short work of William Tell, and to be quit of Eudoxia. For the return journey, she very demonstratively took Esmè into her own carriage, and manœuvred her off the ground, almost before Roderigo was aware of the change of programme. When he *did* make the discovery, his face was a sight to see. Tom roared out laughing. Eudoxia openly made merry at the poor wretch, and tendered him bantering advice, which he rashly took *au sérieux*; for he ran after the carriage and hurled a little farewell bouquet of thyme into it, but, missing his mark, smote Viscount Germistounne, K.T., on the nose withal—and *that* was pretty nearly the last of the count. The throwing of the bouquet at all was a liberty—the accident that it impinged upon his lordship's nose was an outrage. Lord Germistounne and Mrs. Ravenhall both felt this, especially Mrs. Ravenhall, who took the incident as the text for a discourse, commenced then, and afterward finished in private with Lord Germistounne.

This bore on the innate depravity of Italian counts in general, who were often impostors, wearing aces in their sleeves, as necessary accessories of raiment; who were usually connected with the "*CAMORRA*," and *always* heirless-hunters. The application of all this to the luckless Roderigo took place on their return home. "I never liked the man, dear Lord Germistounne. His eyes are quite enough for me, and I *do not* like his companionship for my brother. He has begun to get money out of poor Tom, who is *so* trusting; and I can't stand *that*." The recollection of the count's little *soirées*, and their financial aspects as affecting herself, gave great intensity to this passage. "In short, I really must get Tom away from his influence." Then, with exquisite tact, and speaking as an old and fondly devoted family friend, she gradually insinuated that there was danger for "that sweet, unconscious child." She had seen, she said, things—attentions—which had made her *reflect*. Her eyes, sharpened by womanly tenderness, had noted the wolfish ways of Roderigo. Speaking as a woman, she felt that the count might gain a *deplorable* influence over *any* woman. He was horribly magnetic and glamorous; and being in *absolute want*, there was little doubt that he meant to bring his magnetism and his glamour, and all his other diabolical properties, to market here, and was, in fact, doing so now. No doubt Esmè was so superior, so very superior, she—still, as a matter of parental principle— But there was no need to argue the point. Lord Germistounne's soul was in arms at once. The bare idea of such a monstrosity as that this—this hound should lift his eyes to *his* daughter, had never occurred to him. He towered, in his arrogance, above such a suspicion. The giant walks with his nose in the

air, and trips over the mole-hill. But—once suggested! *Donnerwetter!* Well, he did exactly what Mrs. Ravenhall intended. He had his bill and ordered a chaise for Pontresina, as did Mrs. Ravenhall and Tom; and, with bag and baggage, the combined party thither shifted camp. "There is too much sharpness in the air of St. Moritz," was his lordship's explanation of the move to Esmè. The last object they beheld at the hotel was Roderigo's green and chap-fallen face. His sympathetic Southern nature told him exactly how matters stood. He saw them go, without an *adieu* for Esmè, or a bouquet for her father's nose. With a solemn sweep of his Tyrolese hat, he bade adieu to Love and *écarté*, and a thousand golden dreams.

CHAPTER XX.

COSMO GLENCAIRN did not remain very long at Edlisfort after his memorable interview with his father: he returned to town, and, while all the world made holiday, lived a hermit's life in his chambers. Now fully resolved on a parliamentary career, he plunged into certain ponderous lines of reading which bore on the political science, or manfully explored the dreary literature of blue-books for instruction upon special subjects. Everything about his political life was to be honest, solid, complete. On no half-knowledge were his opinions to rest—from no vague opinions were his political actions to flow; and, since he proposed to himself not the stationary seesaw of a hobby-rider, but keen participation in everything, it will be seen that his earnestness promised to be a hard taskmaster. All measures for the restoration of Phil Denwick to a well-ordered life were put in train. There was no difficulty about the money, which was to be forth-coming in the beginning of autumn; and at that time Phil himself was, according to agreement, to commence his period of probation and practical instruction in Mr. Hopper's office. In doing what he was undertaking to do for Phil, Cosmo wished really to benefit his friend—not merely to extricate him from his present penury, but to make his life stable; so that his bounty carried with it the benevolent condition of work. Phil's gratitude was unbounded, and it would have been a hard condition to which he would not have subscribed to show it, and to please Cosmo. But, indeed, the idea of work—suggesting, as it did, everything that was the converse of his late miserable experiences—was welcome for its own sake; and he, like Cosmo, sprung forward to anticipate it in preparations. Hopper was most affable to the prospective share-holder, let him know what to study in the mean time, and how to set about it; and Cosmo sent him out of town to a quiet place by the sea, where he devoted himself to mastering the theoretical mysteries of commerce and the *arcana* of the iron-trade.

So Phil, living cleanly with the parson of the parish, who was an old Cambridge chum, was a reclaimed prodigal, for whom the swine of Leicesters Square and their husks and other abominations were only an evil memory or occasional nightmare. Mr. Glencairn, indeed, shook his head rather violently over that part of the plan which involved Phil's future admission to the

hierarchy of the company; but, on Hopper assuring him that the probation was to be stringent, and that the prospect of Phil's qualifying was almost nil, he said he "was glad to sanction an arrangement which might benefit his dead friend's son;" which Mr. Hopper assured him was most magnanimous, and exactly like himself—in fact, "quite;" and everything for the present was comfortably settled, as far as Phil's affairs went. Cosmo had returned to town in the early days of June, and in seven weeks thereafter Parliament was prorogued: for as yet there were no "Obstructionists" to paralyze the Legislature and befriending the grouse; and the noodles who addressed the House and wasted its time could then only be counted by the dozen, instead of, as now, by the hundred. So that her Majesty was able to dismiss her faithful Commons for the recess on the 20th of July—which is not like to occur again, unless some one can invent a gag for Hawkins, M.P. And during these weeks, and now, Cosmo was on the *qui vive*; for the incumbent nurse of the "healthy local interest" of the borough of — was expected to resign. And Cosmo had prepared an address for the electors, and written speeches, and studied the local maggots of the borough, and, in short, armed himself at all points for the electoral campaign. Phil Denwick, who came up to see him now and then, used to assist at private rehearsals, when, after listening to the flowing periods of his friend's speeches, he would take up the rôle of a "heckler"—which is the Scotch name for the political exorcism who puts questions to the candidate at political meetings, and who, although always the shallowest dunderhead in the assembly, yet, by dint of not knowing what he is talking about, and of not being able to display even his ignorance in any sort of grammar at all, can undoubtedly trouble and mystify and exasperate a candidate, and is therefore dangerous, and to be considered beforehand. Phil could imitate the ways of this monster, and heckled to perfection; but on such occasions Cosmo always passed with flying colors, and was, *nem. con.*, declared to be a fit and proper person, etc., etc.

Alas! it was all premature. The member for the borough changed his mind. "Circumstances," he wrote to Mr. Glencairn, "had occurred which made it his bounden duty to remain staunch to his post;" and so, though Mr. Glencairn was resolved that his "post" should not continue staunch to the honorable gentleman any longer than *he* could help, there was nothing for it, at present, but to await the general election, which could not be distant.

This was very trying to Cosmo, under all his circumstances. In the first place, he was feverishly anxious to begin. Dim, in the far distance, but overtopping every other motive, there was a light to be reached, and not even to have started in its direction was distressing. Then the near prospect of the contest had naturally brought its preoccupations, besides specially stimulating his studious energy in fields which are sometimes of no great interest in the abstract. And now, in the reaction from this, he lost, for the time, that vantage-ground from which he had been able to discipline his love, and once more, at times, became a sport for "the tempest of the heart," with its ecstatic contemplations, its agonies of longing, and those cruel lulls of blank despond-

ency which are the cruellest of all to bear. At such times it was in vain that he invoked ambition, duty, manhood—in vain that he nerved his resolution, and tried desperately to immerse himself in the dry routine of study. Sentences, read and reread, conveyed no impression. Subtle spirits of the air filched the thoughts from the words, or interwove them with strange fantasies, or flashed the image of a haunting face over the meaningless page, or overwrote it with a haunting name in the splendor of prismatic colors. These spirits come in a note of music, in a sunbeam, in a breath of meadow fragrance. There is no exorcism that can prevail against them. In truth, the burden of his love was over-great for him, now that he had lost the assistance of that spring of a present excitement which derived its virtue from the hopes with which it was connected. This being gone, spirit and flesh alike began to cry out for relief. And a desire to see Esmè again, to hear her voice—but even only to see her, to be near her, though she should be unconscious of his proximity, to breathe the same air, to look at the same mountains, to establish between him and her *some* chain of association, however faint and visionary—this pathetic desire became more and more clamorous, and grew daily to be less resisted. And a longing for a freer air than this of the town fell upon him. Here he began to feel stifled, cramped, and jaded. He would have the quickening breezes of the North; he longed for the hills, and the heather, and the clear streams, and space, and freshness, and movement.

"I require a change," he said to himself; "I am overworked: but my preparations are well advanced; and, let an election come when it may, I am ready; so that I can afford a change: it will not do to be overtrained when the time arrives. I must go away for a change; the question is, whither?" In such prosaic words of feeblest self-deception did he put the case to himself. Yes, he required a change—a change from this twilight life of separation; and the question, "Whither should he go?" was answered by his yearning for the Highland hills, where he knew that she now must be.

But how? whither *exactly*? under what pretext?

It had got to this approach to the concrete, when, one fine morning in the beginning of August, the eminent Mr. Snowie, of Inverness, whose wintry name has sunny associations for all Northern sportsmen, waited upon Cosmo at his chambers.

"Just to see, captain, before I leave town, if we can't even yet come to an arrangement about Finmore. It's still open; full of birds; never was a finer season: pity to lose the chance; cheap, too." Thus Snowie—and exit in ten minutes, with a look on his face which told that Cosmo's questions, "How? whither *exactly*? under what pretext?" had found an answer which was entirely satisfactory, to the worthy agent at least.

No one would for an instant venture to stigmatize Mr. Snowie as a poetical character; but on this occasion it appeared to Cosmo that

"A voice

Went with him, Follow, follow! thou shalt win!"

Let all true-hearted readers hope that the voice *did* say so, and may not prove an impostor.

CHAPTER XXI.

"It will pe somepody that iss koing to Feenmaur."

"What wye to Finmore mair nur ony ither gate?"

"Because there iss a crayt few ither dogs will pe koing to there twa days syne, which I haf saw on to the rod."

"But this isna a dug, Alistair; it's a man."

"You are a pretty smert fel-lo, Tchon Tcheemyson, and so iss your mither; and she leeves in Glasco toon, where aal the shops iss; and you haf a hat on the Saabuth dess, which iss like the meenister's hat; but you are ferry much into the wrong, for aal. This iss not a man."

"You'll no be sayin' it's a wummin, ony wye?"

"That iss pretty true, too. She iss not a wummin, and she iss not a dog; but she iss not a man yathers. She iss a tchentelmanns."

"Haw! haw! haw! haw!"

"Goot life! Tchon Tcheemyson, do not mek that tammd noise with your ucklee mouth. Stop it haystile, or you will fricht aal the sheeps that iss on to the hull-side. She iss a tchentelmanns; and ferry certainly she will pe the tchentelmanns that iss com to Feenmaur; and her dogs will pe koing to there twa days syne, and I haf saw them on to the rod mysel; and her horses and her consarn and her sarvint lasses, and ither things."

"And wha is the gentleman? What do they ca' him?"

"She will pe a captin frae apoot England some gate. Look to her. She is takkin' the rod for Feenmaur."

* * * * *

An interval of intense observation and silence, tempered with the sound of riotous snuffing.

* * * * *

"Goot life! whaat will the craytur pe standin' glowerin' at the castel for aal this time?"

It is a godsend to a Highlander in a lonely district, when any living thing above the rank of a sheep or a grouse comes within the range of his vision; for it affords him a valid excuse for abandoning his lawful occupation, and devoting himself to the phenomenon as long as it remains in sight. The questions who, whence, whither, why, and how, with many minor problems, are grappled with according to the most exhaustive methods; and where there are two philosophers to compare their hypotheses, and squabble over them, the excitement and the idleness may be quite indefinitely prolonged. The dialogue, of which the brilliant fragment above recorded formed a part, took place a few days after the events which occupied our last chapter.

The scene was a hill-side overhanging a beautiful glen in the Mid-Highlands of Scotland, and the speakers, as their dialects may have suggested, were a Highlander and a Lowlander—the former an ancient shepherd supposed to be "tenting" his sheep, the latter a keeper supposed to be "giein' a bit look over the hill," in anticipation of "The Twelfth." The subject of their remarks was a gentleman who was making his way along the high-road which ran below their post of observation; but since he was merely a pedestrian, and therefore scarcely worthy of the mystery enshrouding the "two figures"—invariably on horseback—which used to pioneer

our boyhood into the delights of James's novels, we may frankly admit at once that he was no other than Cosmo Glencairn. Mr. Snowie had dangled the bait of Finmore before his eyes at the right moment. Cosmo had risen to it with an impulse which only gave special expression to a fixed, though half-unconscious, purpose; and here he was, on the 11th of August, in the heart of the Highlands, and *en route* for the shootings in question. His dogs, by a covenant with his father, were quartered during the off-season at Edlisfort, with training and exercising privileges on that domain; and these had arrived, two days before, in charge of his own keeper, or rather *shikari*.

Nor was old Alastair at fault in any of his other surmises; for Cosmo's horses, and a small establishment hastily got together by his trusty *factotum*, had also preceded him, so that everything might be in readiness within the lodge, as well as without on the moor, against his arrival. At the conclusion of his railway journey, of some fifteen hours, from London, he felt rather cramped and fagged; so he dismissed what Alastair called "the consarn," which awaited him at the station, and started on foot, meaning to take to the heather and strike across the hills when he reached the borders of his own territory. A stretch on the hill would, he assured himself, be a beneficial and even necessary preparation for the work of the morrow. It is barely possible, however, that he had some other motive in addition.

The glen which Cosmo entered, shortly after leaving the railway, was almost wide enough, at its entrance, to be called a strath, but narrowed in rapidly, and at its farther extremity was little more than a gorge. The inner sides of the hills which formed it were marked by strange and picturesque irregularities—now projecting bastion-like bluffs and salients of displaced strata, now falling back in ravines and corries and dells. Over all, deep stretches of pine-wood drew their dark covering, smoothing harsh outlines into mellow curves, and melting abrupt discords into flowing transformations; while the lights and shadows, in following the ever-changing contour of the ground, relieved the monotony of the all-pervading and sombre green with a variety more dignified than mere contrast of color can afford. The river, which found a channel in the centre of the glen, rested here, in a level reach, from its struggles with rock and precipice far above, and murmured melodiously along between fair slopes of heather, which came down from the foot of the hills on either side, interspersed with bright bosquets of young larch and hazel, and birch and oak, and all that aromatic shrubbery which makes the Highland wilderness a garden of delight. The majestic silence of the summer noon was marked, rather than broken, by the voice of the water, the song of birds, and the minor sounds of nature, which rippled, as it were, on the surface of its profound depths.

At the top of the glen, high spurs from the opposing hills met and closed it in with a sheer precipice, over which the river passed, from its upper to its lower channel, in a noble fall. The ruins of an ancient keep hung over the caldron on a dizzy ledge, showing dimly through a haze of spray which rose from the abyss below; and on a spacious plateau farther down the right

bank of the stream, a baronial edifice, in the ancient Scottish style, stood out from its background of precipice and wood and scaur and falling foam. The season had been backward, and the first freshness of vegetation still lingered here. The young larches by the river still met the sunbeams with their tenderest green; the splendid purple of the bell-heather had not yielded to its graver substitute; the golden broom fringed the wayside; and all the riparian bells and plumes and tassels of early summer still swung joyously in the breath of the passing stream. Some slight showers had fallen on the previous day; but they had cleared the sky of every cloud, and left a legacy of thymy fragrance to the valley, which greeted Cosmo, as he entered it, with a sweet Highland welcome.

The aspect of the glen was familiar to him. He knew all its beauties by heart. Before now, as he turned into its solitudes, tired with the whirling din of London's high-pressure life, he had felt its stillness fall round him like the benison of some spirit of rest and peace; and, before now, the first inspirations of its unpolluted air had reawakened in him childhood's ecstatic sense of the goodness of life. Here, to-day, was the same infinite repose and the same virgin air; there was nothing changed in the bravery of wood and hill; the river warbled its hymn of content in the same music as of yore, and the song which rung in the thickets was old as the glen itself. But for Cosmo, all to-day was changed and transfigured. The glen of other times was remembered as a faint and colorless sketch. Light, color, fragrance, sound, the sweep of outlines, the harmonious whole, all now seemed instinct with an intense and beautiful vitality. Life had come into them—a soul, and a voice, borrowed from every harmony of nature, which cried to him that the world was fair, but here for him was the climax of all its charms. This was Glenerlacht; and, as he turned a curve of the road, and caught the distant thunder of the water-fall, Esmé's home—the real shrine of his pilgrimage—burst upon his view.

About half a mile from the house, the river, whose banks had by this time become high and precipitous, was crossed by a bridge; and this being the formal commencement of the avenue, it was shut from the high-road by lofty iron gates, flanked by a Gothic lodge, with a warder's tower. The arch, which formed the gate-way, bore on its key-stone the Germistounne escutcheon, assuring the wayfarer, by its innumerable quarterings, of the noble alliances of the family; though the ominous motto which surmounted it—

“Nicht and Nicht mak Nicht”

—suggested that the origin of their possessions was perhaps not altogether so respectable. About this point the high-road turned sharply to the right, as if respecting the privacy of the demesne, and wound up the hill-side, till, at a discreet distance from the avenue, it resumed its direction parallel to the river. Exactly opposite the house another road branched inland to the right. This was the road to Finmore; and it was here that the hawk's eyes of the gossips in the heather above had first detected the lingering form of Cosmo.

Herrick says that

“Love is a circle which doth endless move
In the same sweet eternity of love;”

and, this being so, we are confident that readers will gladly be excused, now and then, from following the lover in his spiritual circumambulations under our pilotage, and will kindly fill in for themselves—some, perhaps, with the superior freshness of personal experience—the various phases of exaltation, and so forth, with which Love's pilgrim drew near the shrine of his divinity. To their imaginations, therefore, we commit the interval which separated Cosmo's first emotions on entering the sacred glen from the moment when Alastair (as though resenting the misuse of the epithet) remarked, “Goot life! whaat will the craytur pe standin' glowerin' at the castral for, aal this time?”

We may well believe that Cosmo had got through a good deal of this sort of contemplation, as he came slowly up the valley; in fact, that from the moment the castle became visible, his eye had rested upon no other object, and all the more intensely when a union-jack, proclaiming the presence of the family, was seen to float from the central tower. Yet when he got to the cross-road, he had by no means looked his last, for he sat down, and, pulling out a powerful deer-stalker's glass, proceeded to sweep therewith the castle and its grounds. Cosmo strained his eyes across the glen, but he could descry no living thing about the place; the esplanade, the terraces, the walks on the wooded hill beyond, the very windows of the house, all were scanned over and over again, but vainly. A glimpse of any one, however remotely connected with Esmé, would have been a relief; even Lord Germistounne, if he would only have condescended to show himself, would have been quite a godsend. But no one came. An hour passed. Where were all the people? Would no one ever come? What did the flag mean? He got quite peevish about the flag. If the family were not at home, why didn't some one have the common honesty to come and haul it down? It was a swindle. He grew bitter; he felt aggrieved; the petulance of a lover rose in him; and after an hour and a half of fruitless vigil, he took the road for Finmore. But—O blessed backward glance, which no true lover e'er denied his lady or his lady's bower!—just before the road dipped and cut him off from hope, he turned and looked once more, and this time not in vain. Figures—one, two, three—a host of figures were streaming from the castle doors; and it is needless to say that Cosmo sped back to his post of observation, and again, with trembling hands, brought his glass into position.

By this time there were at least a dozen people on the esplanade—male and female forms; but though the glass was a good one, it failed to reach the minutiae of human features, polish and readjust it as Cosmo might. Figures, gestures, colors of dress, all could be distinguished, but the faces were blanks: and even about the individuality of the figures it was at first difficult to speculate, as the party remained massed together.

Presently there appeared in relief, on the steps in front of the house, a figure which there was no difficulty in identifying. Tall, erect, and stiff, it extended its arms toward the group, as if directing them to some particular point; and in the blended characteristics of the lamp-post and the lion rampant, Lord Germistounne shone revealed. Apparently his instructions were not at

first comprehended; for the lion's paws shot out, and sawed the air impatiently, and at angles which defied heraldic canons. And now from the group below, an airy form detached itself and ascended the lion's pedestal, and seemed to lay playful and soothing hands upon the agitated arms. Some one asking for an explanation, of course. Some one? Ah! here, at least for Cosmo, there was no vagueness, no uncertainty. Cruel distance might veil the divine features; but the contour, the attitudes, the undulating graces of movement—these, at twice the distance, would have proclaimed the adorable personality to the eyes and the instincts of love. Esmè! The glass shook in Cosmo's hand; his color went and came, and his voice quivered as he murmured aloud the name which, for him, was the epitome of all music. But the rapture of steady contemplation was denied him. Esmè immediately left her father, and ran back to the group, which now broke up and streamed down to a terrace by the river, and a good deal nearer to Cosmo. And now he could see Esmè's face Ah!

* * * * *

A good deal of conference and arrangement seemed to take place; a couple of footmen brought down from the house a large, oblong box; and at last mystery and chaos solved and evolved themselves in the disorderly order of lawn-tennis. Two sets engaged in the game, which was played with much spirit by all concerned, the firm and nimble rushings and boundings of the male performers being not more full of *élan* than the wondrous swoopings and gyrations of the ladies. They played with only too much spirit to suit Cosmo's purpose; for, though a lover's eyes are quicker than other eyes, his telescope is as fractious and unmanageable as every other telescope is. And thus, when he essayed to track Esmè through the mazes of the game, this perverse instrument was never up to time. Now she would be in repose, and, the focus having been brought warily across the lawn, he would just have begun to drink in the rays of an aureole, when, lo!—a flash! a jerk!—and Cosmo's amorous gaze was lost in a bank of senseless turf. Or now, with the energy of desperation, the telescope would give chase, and participate in all the acrobatics of the game—up, down, right, left, scouring, rushing, scurrying—but doomed to eternal disappointments, forever settling on the blue flannel body of a corpulent male, or painfully travelling up a skirt to reach a female waist of the most revolting dimensions.

The sorrows of Tantalus, or of a man attempting to shoot rabbits with an Enfield rifle, sink into insignificance when compared with Cosmo's present ordeal. Exasperating, truly; so exasperating that he was just pronouncing lawn-tennis a game only worthy of *Mænads* and *Satyrs*, in which, if a *Sylph* permitted herself to take part, she was—when, ah! thank goodness! it was over at last. Esmè retired to the bench of spectators, and a new game began. Everything looked promising. Now, telescope, now! Vain hopes! When the focus struggled into the proper position, it collided with a pair of male legs, and, ascending, was hopelessly stopped by a broad back in a jersey striped with all the colors of the rainbow. The body thus arrayed was actually standing right in front of Esmè, and by

its gestures appeared to be very gay and conversational. But surely the—*the brute* was not going to dare to stand there forever, intercepting her view of the game? He might; Cosmo said to himself that he very possibly might, seeing that a fellow with stripes of that description must be capable of any enormity. But no; another figure came to the rescue—a female figure of dignified movements, who had been standing hitherto somewhat apart, looking up, as if in conversation, to the terrace above, from the edge of which Lord Germistonne appeared to watch the game.

When Esmè retired from the contest, this lady, who was veiled and unrecognizable, at once got under way; and presently the hyperbolic jersey was replaced on the disk of the telescope by a curtain of blue serge of equal opaqueness. This woman was as bad as the man! Right in front again! What on earth was she about? She seemed to be engaged in a little amicable struggle with the invisible princess, and in which a white cashmere shawl appeared to play a prominent part. Mysterious! Ah! her object evidently was to wrap the shawl in question round the resisting form of the young lady—evidently. There! she had carried her point, and now, of course, she would go. Not a bit of it. Some officious wretch brought her a light garden-chair, and she sat down, again right in front; and all that the telescope could now report was a new aspect of the blue serge body, and, above and beyond it, the upper half of the demon in stripes, who had moved round to the back of Esmè's chair. Nothing of the fair girl was visible but fitful glimpses of the top of her hat; for these two people seemed to heave forward against each other like opposing waves, and obscured the treasure which lay in the intervening trough. It was sickening! He turned the telescope impatiently on other members of the party, and became aware of a neat lilac figure, which seemed to flit about among the rest like a thing of joy. All the ladies he addressed appeared to be at once agitated with laughter; while the men doubled themselves up, smote their knees, and retired, convulsed and tottering. "What a buffoon!" sneered Cosmo; and then, "Of course! just as I expected! Tom Wyedale!"

Cosmo observed his friend's proceedings with rather a grim expression, which was by no means mollified when the "thing of joy," flitting past Esmè's group, was suddenly absorbed into it, and added another and decidedly aggressive element to the obscuring sea.

Matters continued to go on in this way for a long time; for, though game after game took place, and the players were constantly relieved, Esmè played no more, and the attendant group remained constant to her, and all in the same regrettable positions. "If they *ONLY* knew," thought Cosmo, "how ridiculous they look!" And yet a disinterested person would hardly have agreed with him; for they were all decidedly good-looking, and their gestures, however aggravating, were the gestures of well-bred and graceful people.

At last a couple of empty carriages drove up to the door, and a "powdered menial" came forth, and solemnly tolled a great booming bell which hung in one of the turrets. Whereupon, like a dog infected by the barking of other dogs,

Lord Germistoun immediately began to wave his hat with great impetuosity (no doubt shouting lustily the while) to the group below, which must have been well disciplined, for the games were at once discontinued, and players and spectators moved promptly toward the house. Esmè was thus again visible for a little, but very slightly; for the waves were true to their mission, and floated about her without intermission; the devoted lady leaning upon her arm; the man of stripes moving, tall and graceful, on her other side (much too close, Cosmo thought); while Tom Wyedale hovered promiscuously round the group, whose lively gestures told that his quips and cranks were numerous and effective.

Nothing could be more joyous than the *ensemble* of the whole party, which now disappeared, leaving Cosmo gazing into vacancy. The pageant had come and gone like the episode of a dream wherein Lord Germistoun had been a magician that had set the revellers in order with a wave of his hand, and then dispersed them, as abruptly as Prospero's voice dismissed from their "country footing" his airy band of "fresh nymphs and sunburned sicklemen." Cosmo remained gazing abstractedly into vacancy, perplexed like one half roused from sleep, and doubting between illusion and reality. Very presently, however, this was succeeded by a vivid and painful sense of the reality of all he had seen. Painful? He had seen Esmè, and surely that was bliss? Where, then, was his gratitude—where his ecstasy? Yes, he had seen her, and the first glimpse of her, indeed, had electrified him; but ecstasy had been shortly suppressed by supervening circumstances, and gradually replaced by emotions far removed from the ecstatic. The mere mechanical difficulties of contemplation had been damping, the physical obstructions irritating, and the persistence of the obstructionists enraging. But these were by no means all. Through force of his transcendental musings, and by the intense sympathy which an intense passion produces, Esmè had become to him, in some degree (if we may be permitted to soar so high for a parallel), what Beatrice was to Dante—ever present to him, and ever present in a halo of gracions attributes, which daily grew more and more real and familiar; so that her idea came to be linked with every association of the ethereal and the beautiful and the good which touched his consciousness. To-day, as he wandered up the glen, her spirit had seemed to come forth from all its beauties, and to hold commune with his own.

"She stoop'd to him
From all high places, lived in all fair lights."

And at this exalted level of sentiment he had been confronted with the scene just described.

The antithesis was obviously grotesque; but it was not its grotesqueness which struck Cosmo. A certain shock, to be sure, is involved in the idea of Psyche engaging in a boisterous sport with the full-fleshed children of men; and it may possibly have been a slight shock to Cosmo to behold the heroine of his day-dreams translated to similar conditions. But our modern Psyche is muscular. It is a wholesome fact with which we are all familiarized; so that he could not have been seriously affected by that consideration. What really affected him was, that she who had moved through his reveries in a halo of perfec-

tions had been there contemplated only in relation to *himself*.

There were but two inhabitants in his psychological paradise—Esmè and himself. No other individuality intruded itself between them; she was there for him alone. Whereas here, dream-land dissolving, she was beheld as the joyous central figure of a bright and joyous life—beheld in a hundred new aspects and connections, not one of which had any relation to *him*. How complete was his nothingness to her! how wide the gulf which yawned between them; how remote and insignificant the orbit in which his life circled around hers!—such were the immediate convictions which displaced in his mind the fair fabric woven, through many a week, by the dreams of fancy and hope. Nor was this the worst. It was sufficiently desolating, indeed, to feel that he was nothing to her; it was even distressing to be convinced that she must be much to others; but a far keener anguish was involved in the suspicion that another might be much to her. The egotism of his love, aroused and wounded, was not likely to leave unused against itself certain suggestive incidents in the little drama which had passed before his eyes. There was an eclipse in his mind of all the morning's brightness; wintry twilight reigned instead; harsh discords rent the melodious flow of his thoughts; the outer world was transfigured; the light seemed to fade in the valley; and all the voices of nature jarred together, like sweet bells jangled out of tune. Sadly he addressed himself to his journey; his step was heavy on the hill; the heather had lost all its spring; and in this sad plight he approached his solitary abode.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE shooting-lodge of Finmore was charmingly situated: it stood high, on a breezy plateau; no neighboring hill overtopped it, nor was it stifled by surrounding woods. Behind and around, and far and near, the eye could range over glowing undulations of moorland, reaching at one point a distant range of hills, whence the river which watered Glenelicht streamed down through the heather tracts, passing below Finmore, and in view of the house, till lost in the pine-woods which closed around it, as it approached the tragedy of its career at the great fall above the castle. When next visible, its ordeal was past, and it was gliding through the lower glen where we first made its acquaintance, so that the castle and its sacred precincts were not to be seen from Finmore.

The lodge—originally a farm-house—had been added to in such a way as to make it commodious and comfortable as well as picturesque; and, altogether, it was as cheery and enviable a shooting-quarter as man need wish for. Cosmo had already spent many happy days there; but this afternoon there was no happy recognition in his eye as he approached it. After all, the lodge and the shooting were now mere pretexts, which had no interest apart from the real object that had brought him here; and, since gloom and darkness enshrouded that object at present, he could see nothing in the place but a centre of desolation. Even the sportsman's instinct—so

hard to suppress—failed to assert itself. The “muircock” gabbled its ineffable music, as he passed over the muir; covey after covey whirled up from his very feet, and deployed their rich brown phalanges before his eyes; the black-cock *vedette* rolled his burnished plumage leisurely against the sun; but Cosmo’s pulses were unstimulated.

A flight of wild-duck sailed over his head, so close that he could plainly see the green neck of the leading mallard, and almost catch its eye; yet even this supreme incident failed to rouse him. A mallard, and within shot! What stronger evidence could be given of morbid and unnatural apathy? Grange, his confidential servant and *factotum* of many years’ standing, who had accompanied him on his many travels, and “understood him” better than most people, met him at the door as he arrived, and was vexed to see that the air of listless depression which he had latterly shaken off had returned. Philipson, his *shikari*, who had never seen him in such a mood before, was at his wits’ end to account for such gloom on the eve of the shooting season; and when he strolled round to the kennels, old Davidson, the keeper, was perplexed, mortified, and outraged by the callousness of his tone in dealing with topics of the sacredest interest.

Davidson was a Lowlander transplanted to the Highlands by his absentee master, with some idea that in the “antagonism of races” he might find a safeguard against spoliation. He was a long-headed, persistent old fellow, with a keen eye to the main chance, and a foible for getting his own way, and of wearing out opposition by a sometimes maddening prolixity; but he was eager about sport, and, if dishonest, was too clever to let one have the annoyance of detecting him; so that he was, to a very fair extent, the right man in the right place, as far as the tenant was concerned.

“How many guns wull there be the morn, sir?” he inquired, after he and Cosmo had exchanged greetings.

“Only my own,” said Cosmo.

Davidson gave a start of surprise and disapprobation, and said, “We wus reckonin’ on fower.”

“Were you? I really don’t know why you should.”

“Weel, sir, ye see, wi’ nae mair than ae gun, there’s nae sort o’ justice can be dunc the muir ava’.”

“We’ll try it, at all events.”

“Maybe some ither jantleman will be expectit sune?”

“No; I don’t expect any one, this season.”

“Peety me! That’s bad, that’s dayspret bad. Ye see, sir, the muir’s big, and the birds is plenty; but if we dinna tak them sune, we’ll mibbee no’ get them ava’. They’re gey strong the year, and a wee thing wild a’ready; and if so be as the wither comes to brak—whoosh! it’s a’ bye. Ye’ll no’ win within twa perishes o’ them. Ye may as weel gang grouse-shuting in Loch Lomond. Ae gun’s no’ fit to dae mair than kittle this muir. Beggin’ your paurdon, sir, it’s clean wastry. Mr. Pheelipson, your ain sportman, wus geein’ his opeenyun this mornin’ that we suld begin wi’ sax guns at the laist—that’s what he thinks. ‘It’s ma opeenyun,’ says he, ‘that—’”

“Never mind Philipson’s opinion; I must do

the best I can with my own gun. There will be all the more birds for next year; that’s one thing.”

But a plethora of birds next year had no bearing on the “tips” of the present season, which, at this rate, promised to be a minus quantity; so Davidson returned to the charge:

“Weel, sir, excaize me; it’s no’ the birds o’ this year, or the next, or the next afterlin’, that I’m thinkin’ o’. What I aye like is, to contant the jantleman wha is ma maister for the time so bein’—as ye hae been yersel, sir, and sae may ken. And I’ll jist exactlee mak sae bauld as to say that ae gun is no’ fit—”

“How do you find the dogs this year, Davidson?”

“Brawly, sir; the dugs is jist in what I may ca’ extra fine condection. Eh! puir beesties! it’ll be a hard job to fin’ aixerceese for them a’ the year, let alane wark. Wi’ ae gun it’s clean impossible. What’s to come o’t, I dinna ken; unless, indeed, ye was tae tak the thoct o’ gettin’ twa or three, or mibbee fower, jantlemen ower frae the caustle, frae time to time. There’s a heap o’ company there, I’m tellt; and Mr. Pheelipson thinks he saw Mr. Whydal at the station—Mr. Whydal, sir; that’s him that was here ance afore. Dod! he’s a gran’ shot, him!—and—weel, sir, that’s the hail chance that I can see for the muir and the dugs and a’” (“keeper’s pocket” being substituted for “a’,” Mr. Davidson’s drift and pertinacity are explained); “and that’s no’ ma ain thoct alane, sir—it’s the opeenyun o’ yer ain body-sportman, Mr. Pheelipson, wha said—”

“Confound Mr. Philipson, and you too! Why do you keep bother, bother, bothering about the moor? I suppose I may be allowed to judge for myself?” cried Cosmo, whose exhausted patience was not re-enforced by this allusion to the castle and its male inhabitants.

“Aweel, sir, ye maun excaize me; it was for yer ain pleasure I was thinkin’, and naethin’ else. Ye’ll tak a look at the dugs, sir?”

“No; hang the dogs!”

“Aweel, aweel. Beggin’ your paurdon, sir, what na puirt was ye thinkin’ o’ takin the morn, sir?”

“Any part; I don’t care; it’s all one to me.”

“If so be as we wus takin’ Craig Rona side, sir, I bude to sen’ the dugs awa’ airly, ye see, sir; an’ ye’d hae to stairt braw an’ airly yersel.”

“Then we’ll not take Craig Rona to-morrow.”

“It wad be the maist fecsablest kin’ o’ beat for the morn, sir.”

“I tell you, I won’t go there.”

“Weel, sir, there’s the ‘Three Kimmers’—a tarable heap o’ birds thereawa’, the year.”

“Well, I don’t know. I won’t decide to-night. Have everything ready to start at ten o’clock to-morrow morning, and I’ll make up my mind in the mean time.”

“Ten o’clock, sir! and it ‘the Twalf!’”

“I said ‘ten,’ didn’t I? Have everything ready at that hour; and when I give an order, obey it, and don’t discuss it.” So saying, Cosmo turned angrily on his heel, and left the pawky old keeper much marvelling at the change which had come over his once urbane and enthusiastic master.

“I tall ye, Lauchie,” he afterward explained

to one of his subs, "the man's clean cheinged. He cam' roun' to the kannels for naethin' awa' that I could see; glowerin' and fuffin' up at ilka word; and naethin' wad please and naethin' wad sairve him—deenin' and dammin' a'thing frae Mr. Pheellipson hissel doon to the dugs, puir beasties—him that was aye sae douce and ceevil; and nae kin' o' hert in the sport, and nae kin' o' respect for the day itsel—him that was aye sae keen. Dod! it's maist tar'ble the cheinge that's com'd ower him. Ae gun, too! Niver heed, Lauchie! Wait a wee, ma man! That Mr. Whydal 'll be ower to help us, or I'm muckle mistaen. He's an awfie notion o' the "Three Kimmers," that Mr. Whydal. 'Davidson,' says he to me when he gaed awa' the last time (he gied me five pun', mair be token), 'aye keep the "Three Kimmers" for me,' says he, 'when ye hear that I'm in thae pairts,' says he. Dod! an' I wull."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WRITERS whose aim it is to insist upon the tearful aspects of humanity have made large use of the pathos which associates itself with the abandonment of cherished habits and pleasures, when bereavement has dislocated a life and taken the savor away from everything that once delighted it. But mankind are capricious in the bestowal of their sympathy; and, though they extend it eagerly to the sorrows of the heart, where death has intervened, have little or none to spare for the sufferings of the lover, however true and poignant they may be. Therefore we shall not attempt the hopeless task of touching the reader's sense of the pathetic by describing the melancholy evening which Cosmo passed in his lodge on this 11th of August, nor dwell upon that happier time when for him the eve of "the Twelfth" was a vigil, when he watched the stars grow pale and the dawn approach, eager to rush afieid with the first practicable light. Suffice it to say that he passed the evening in sore discontent, and that if his night was sleepless, the fever of sport had nothing to do with it; for he was better than his word, and, to Davidson's great disgust, was not even ready at ten next morning, but kept, what that worthy called "the haill apothek" (including, perhaps, keepers, dogs, and birds impatient for annihilation), waiting for a solid hour.

The day was perfect; and to a sportsman in full possession of his senses such tardiness would have appeared an impossible crime. With no symptom of conscious guilt, however, though with a sad eye and a heavy step, Cosmo at last made his appearance.

"Good—morning, Davidson; a fine day it seems."

"A fine day it *was*, sir; but I'm dootin' the best o' it's gane by. They've been bleezin' awa' on the caustle muir this five hours."

"Ah, well! they've got half their fun over, and mine is all before me"—a bit of philosophy which Davidson could only meet with the remark,

"Ov coorse, if a jantleman thinks naethin' awa' o' the hag, ae hour may be as gude as anither."

With the view of pointing the moral that a large establishment was criminally wasted upon

a single gun, he had paraded a preposterous number of gillies and dogs, and, with fine satire, had even produced a couple of hill-ponies, duly equipped with panniers.

"What the dence is the meaning of all this?" cried Cosmo, when his eye fell upon the imposing force.

Davidson gave a well-acted start of sudden recollection. "Ach, dod! I clean forgot, sir! Ye see, it's jist whaat's usual here on 'the Twalf', wi' fower or five, or mibbee sax guns; and it fair escapit me that we was gann to attempt the muir wi' ae guu. Hae, Lauchie; tak hame thae pownies, and—How many dugs will ye be wantin', sir?"

"Two couple will do, and another man besides yourself."

"Vara weel, sir. Tak yont thae pownies, Lauchie; and ye'll stay wi' me and the captin, Aunra, and keep the black setter and the livert pinter, and thae twa young anes, and Rock; and see you, Donald, tak hame thae ither dugs; and a' you men, ye may gang and hag pents, or howk tawties, or whaat ye please. There's nae wark here for *you*, the day; mibbee the year, wha kens?" he added, *sotto voce*; and having thus made his dispositions with an air of being injured, yet resigned, he relapsed into a sulky silence. Cosmo, all unconscious of the poor keeper's wrath, and with a mind occupied with very different subjects, mechanically took his gun and some cartridges, and, followed by the other men, sauntered slowly on to the moor. His eyes turned in the direction of Glenelacht, and his steps followed his gaze. "We'll haud wast a wee, captain," suggested Davidson; but his remark was unheeded.

"Wull I lowse the dugs, sir?" he presently asked.

"Yes, yes; of coorse."

"But we're gann strecht doon win', sir."

"Never mind."

The dogs were being uncoupled, when a covey rose beside them—a splendid strong covey. Cosmo mechanically cocked his gun, levelled, and drew trigger. Click! He was unloaded.

Davidson's red beard and whiskers bristled with indignation. "Dod! that's maist notawrious!" he cried, when he recovered breath; and then, as another covey, startled by the music of the first, rose and swept away down wind—"See till them! jist see till them! Ganging awa' in thoosands! poasiteevly in thoosands! and a' doon to his lordship's grun'. Ae gun's bad eneuch, but ae unlodden gun—"

"Hold your tongue, Davidson! Don't make sugh an infernal noise!" And on they went steadily down the wind—steadily down toward the glen which was magnetizing Cosmo. The dogs, hunting on a side wind, got occasional points, which Cosmo negotiated; but sometimes the scent drew them far away back, up wind, upon which occasions he steadily declined to pay any attention to him. Davidson was in despair. "Hae, captin! Juno's pintin'," he would cry. "Where?"

"Jist about a mile ahint" (bitterly).

"Let her point, then, or call her off. I'm not going back all that distance. Why don't you keep your dogs in hand?"

Then, after a little—"It's the young dug this time, sir."

"Hang the young dog!"

"It'll clean ruin that young dug, if he gets nae notice taen o' his pints."

But neither Davidson's remarks nor the dog obtained the slightest attention.

"He's clean daft," whispered the keeper to his sub.

At last they reached the boundary between Finmore and Dunerlacht; and at last Cosmo was obliged to "tak wast;" but he did so in the most unsatisfactory manner, for he kept close to the boundary-wall, and his head was turned constantly in the direction of the glen, and all the more constantly when the smoke of the castle became visible, rising above the woods.

"Deil's i' the man!" muttered Davidson; "he'll no tak his ain birds. What wye will he be aye keekin' and glowerin' efter his lordship's?"

A fine sunny slope of heather, however, where the birds lay thick, here intervened, and Cosmo's great skill as a shot enabled him to run his score up tidily, notwithstanding his preoccupation, and Davidson was temporarily appeased.

Presently the sound of guns on the Dunerlacht side became audible.

"We'll gang sooth a wee, captin," suggested the keeper. "The caastle folk is comin' this way, and mibbee they'll be thinkin' that we're on the watch for their birds, if we hing sae nigh the march: we'll get the win' brawly, mair be token."

Again the voice of the charmer charmed in vain. A turret of the castle now became visible. Cosmo halted, and had a good long stare at it, indifferent to the fact that Juno was turning imploring eyes backward from the steadiest of points, and that the young dog was "backing," but with every symptom of impatience. Davidson called the dogs off, "took them up," and remained standing motionless—the picture of petrified indignation. Cosmo had his look, and went on again without a remark. The dogs were again uncoupled, and presently Cosmo had another halt and another stare, accompanied by the same manœuvres on the part of the keeper, who was now beyond the power of speech. Thus matters went on, time after time, till, when it was quite two o'clock, Cosmo turned from one of his long contemplations and said ("just as if naething was wrang ava"),

"I think it's about time for luncheon now, Davidson. Let's see what you've got in that basket."

He was leaning against the march dike, with his face away from Dunerlacht, when, suddenly, something that sounded like the war-cry of Red Indians was bellowed into his ear, and he sustained a shock on the back which shot him forward almost on to the top of the kneeling keepers. Staggering back, he beheld Davidson's upturned face wreathed in grins of delight, and heard him say,

"Maister Whydal! I'm prood to see ye, sir, the day."

"Aha, Mr. Cosmo! unearthed you at last, sly old fox! This is what you call the islands of the Ægean, is it? Oh, you miscreant! as soon as you think I'm planted for the autumn, you stand in for Finmore! Shabby, upon my life! too shabby! a great deal too shabby!"

"It was quite a sudden thought," said Cosmo, with some confusion, when he had shaken hands

with his friend, whose prodigious vitality and quasi geniality had a sort of charm, when in his company, which softened Cosmo's harsher thoughts of him, in spite of himself.

"That's no excuse," replied Tom. "I always measure the merit of an impulse by its opportuneness. Now, to make this impulse of yours a good one, it ought to have exploded in May down at Como. Never mind. We may be happy yet. I say, Davidson, how are the 'Three Kimmers'?"

"Hech! hech! hech!" chuckled the keeper, in great delight. "The vara words—the vara eedaintical words—I was expeckin'! The 'Three Kimmers,' sir, is brawly; jist smooored wi' grouse the year."

"You'll have me over one of these fine days to give them a toozling."

"Weel, sir, they'll waant a' the toozlin' they can get; and I'm share we'll be prood to see ye, sir (beggin' the captin's paurdon), for ye can see yersel, Mr. Whydal, that we're short-handed; and you that kens 'The Kimmers' kens brawly that wi' nae mair than ae gun—"

"Get the lunch out, Davidson, and don't stand chattering there all day. You'll lunch with me, Tom?"

"Well, I don't know; let's see what you've got."

"Oh! something quite simple—sandwiches, probably, and sherry and cold tea. Is that it, Davidson?"

"That's the apothek, sir; naythur mair nur less."

"I can't say I think much of 'the apothek,' then. No, Cosmo, I won't lunch with you to-day. By-the-bye, I have an invitation for you to join our lunch-party; indeed, that's what I came for. Lord Germistoun (I'm with him, of course) asked the keeper a few minutes ago who that was platooning away on Finmore, and we heard for the first time that you were here; and the old gentleman presents his compliments, and hopes, etc., etc. They're close by. We'd better go at once. There's a *pâté*, but it's not large; and Jack Ruggles, who eats for ten, had his eye on it before I left. Let us go."

"But am I really invited?"

"Of course."

"Then how on earth did you think of staying to lunch here?"

"Oh, if you had had anything really very eatable, I wouldn't have let the other lunch stand in my way. A reindeer's tongue, perhaps. Yes, I think, for a reindeer's tongue, in peace and quietness, I would have let his lordship slide."

"Well, you are a cool hand."

"I am; it's the secret of my success in the face of interminable difficulties; cool, sagacious, prompt. Come on."

Cosmo got over the wall and accompanied his friend.

"Good sport, Tom?" he asked.

"Very fair, indeed, I think; but the guns hadn't all come in. My pal and I certainly have done well; but the score wasn't made up when I left. We have eight guns out, including the old man, who won't go for much, and a French count, who is more likely to bag a pony or a gillie than anything else, from what I saw of his start. But it's really a great moor. By-the-bye, when I've taken the cream off it, I'll come and

have a look at your 'Kimmers'—seriously, I will."

"That's most kind of you."

"Oh, you may sneer as much as ever you please, but I will."

"All right, Tom—all right; you shall;" and then, with an effort to appear unconcerned, but conscious of a tremor in his voice, he said, "Have you a pleasant party in the house?"

"Ye-es; on the whole, pretty decent. Too many people, though—we dine twenty-five. I hate that. Too many women, too; bothering all over the place; won't let you alone for a moment—billiards, lawn-tennis, everything. They're all up here to-day; jolted up in carts, by George! Even that old hag Lady Bugles has come. She will certainly never get all her patent teeth and the whole of her complexion back to the castle. That's one comfort."

"What do you mean by 'all up here?' " faltered Cosmo, who had turned very pale.

"Exactly what I say. They've come up here with the luncheon, to bother us over it; and they've brought us all the way down to this corner, right away from the afternoon beats, just to suit their own convenience. Women are so infernally selfish! It's all owing to that abominable Mrs. Crock, who has her eye on Lord Ribston, and is always scheming things of the sort. She might save herself the trouble, for Ribston's on another tack altogether—Miss Douglas, you know, *my* heiress—ha! ha! I say, do you remember how you flared up about her, that night you had the blues, at Cadenabbia? ha! ha! ha! Well, Ribston is 'on' in that quarter; perhaps *he* might save himself the trouble too. *Nous verrons*. And here they are; and, just as I thought, old Ruggles *has* collared the *pâté*. Look at him! the cormorant!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THEY had turned the shoulder of a little knoll, and came quite suddenly upon the party, who were disposed in every variety of picnic attitude, in a sheltered hollow. Cosmo was vaguely conscious of a large concourse of people; of a blaze of color; of a loud hum of talk and laughter, and of the clatter of knives and plates. But he saw nothing distinctly, and paused at the edge of the circle in a state of complete bewilderment. Then he heard a voice cry, "Unearthed him, you see, Lord Germistoun! caught him in the very act of a sulky luncheon!" And then he was aware of a quaint, green shooting-coat, ridiculously puckered up at the shoulders; and of a preposterous gray sugar-loaf hat; decked with a blackcock's tail; and of a pair of shepherd-plaid trousers and yellow gaiters; and of a long, bony hand which touched his own icily with two of its fingers; and, lastly, of a harsh and metallic voice which recalled him to himself, like a *douche*, and proclaimed that the *ensemble* made up Lord Germistoun.

"How do you do, sir? how do you do?" said his lordship, pompously. "Be seated here. Ronald! a game-bag for the gentleman. There is a pasty and a mayonnaise, and a recommendable galantine. Let me help you to something."

His dislike for Cosmo was cordial; but the

instincts of heather hospitality are strong, and the resultant of these two forces was a manner in which austerity and fussiness were rather uncomfortably blended.

"And for wine," he went on, "which I never drink on the moor, there is sherry and light Bordeaux. These heretics, as you see, drink champagne. I am too much of a sportsman to do that, or even to recommend the heresy; still, if you *will* be heretical," etc., etc.; and having made superficial arrangements for Cosmo's nourishment, he turned his back upon him frankly, and resumed his conversation with an eager-looking French gentleman which Cosmo's arrival had interrupted.

Left thus to himself, and with his self-possession somewhat restored, he cast a rapid glance over the party, and at once encountered Esme's eyes, who greeted him with a gracious bow and a kindly smile, and, as he was staggering up to go and pay formal respects, cried, "Pray don't think of rising just now, Mr. Glencairn; pray don't. I am sure you must be dreadfully hungry, after your morning's work. I hope you have had very good sport."

Hungry! sport! what did the words mean? Cosmo, blushing and stammering like an idiot school-boy, replied *à tort et à travers*, but was generally understood to intimate that, having eaten thirteen and a half brace of grouse that forenoon, he now felt himself pretty much in the humor for sport—a statement which roused the interest of his neighbors, so that he was conscious of a slight titter, followed by a short silence of curious observation; under which circumstances, he devoted himself to his luncheon with a false air of appetite and absorption, but tingling all over, and feeling that the merest worm which crawls this earth occupies a high place in the scale of creation compared with his; also, that it would be a capital thing if the hill above would kindly flow down and overwhelm him and all the rest, and so blot out forever the history of this accursed moment.

But the silence was not of long duration; for this picnic was unlike the normal picnic, that most *triste* and sodden of festivities. It was really gay. Whether it was owing to the air, or the heather, or the champagne heresy, or what not, Cosmo thought he had never been among people who so laughed and talked, and seemed so generally to enjoy themselves; and when he had long sunk into well-earned oblivion, he began to look about him, and take stock of the party, which, as Tom had said, was large. Though Cosmo had, yesterday, bestowed most of his attention on one group, he recognized a good many of the people who had taken part in what to him was a pantomime, on the lawn-tennis ground: with a good many faces, too, he was familiar, as a town-frequent, but he saw no personal acquaintance.

There were many of the types, male and female, usually to be met with at such, and indeed most, social gatherings, at a certain social level: the London "young man of the day," with his fine physique and comely features, and that look of hard immobility and indifference in which our cynics read the selfishness and irreverence of his nature; and the London "young lady of the day," with her eternal gleesomeness, which bears (according to our cynics) the same relation to the

fresh joy of youth which her premature pearl-powder bears to its bloom; and that maturer, hawk-like lady (inevitable, wherever two or three are gathered together for the *cultus* of Pleasure and Mammon), with her restless look of craning, which suggests that she is hungry for something—for some one to love, perhaps, but much more likely (if she is single) for some one to marry, or, in any case, to toady; and the shaggy man of distinction, who stands upon his own merits, and is here and everywhere, and indeed in the most incongruous places, because he is a "topic of the day;" and the plump, comely young marion, just under middle-age, well dressed, popular, all things to all men (to their faces, that is), but nothing to *any one* man (having chosen the safer paths of gastronomy), except her husband, and not very much to him, who is also here, young-looking, gentlemanlike, easy, indifferent, fond of a rubber and a good run, but on the whole merely an appendage to the pleasant, selfish humbug who is his helpmate; and the iron-gray club man, whose face is to be seen framed in some window of almost any club in St. James's Street or Pall Mall, who "abominates this sort of thing," but braves it, in consideration of the cook and the cellar, and because his doctor has prescribed ozone; and a sprinkling of neutrals, only remarkable as being God's creatures; and—all the rest of them: except, by-the-bye (and this is a large and important exception), those sprightly matrons who have histories, whether preserved by oral tradition in clubs, or entered in the chronicles of the law courts; except, too, those gay dogs who have helped them to compile their biographies, and have the misfortune to be, for the moment, notorious as their *collaborateurs*. These were quite unrepresented; for Lord Germistounne, independently of the fact that he loved his daughter, was, as we have seen, full of antique prejudice, and belonged to that stale old epoch when a cracked or dusky reputation was socially as disqualifying as dirty hands or doubtful linen. There were some "locals," too, not so easily to be classed, except in the rough-and-ready way in which Tom Wyedale told them off, as "fellows with the air of having their coats made by their bootmakers, and of cherishing earnest convictions about police rates and the Colorado beetle."

The business part of the entertainment was over, except in so far as concerned Mr. Ruggles, who was still in position in front of the *pâté*, appearing to be somewhat swollen and jaded, but with a look in his eye of "die, but never surrender." The variegated party had shifted and shuffled themselves into congenial groups or couples. The men, cigarette in mouth, were sprawling, nineteenth-century fashion, among the ladies, at every angle and in every attitude suggested by ease rather than grace, and were languidly accepting the attentions of surrounding nymphs, who did their best to solace and divert "the poor, tired, worn-out unfortunates."

The liveliest group was typical; it displayed a *parterre* of ravishing female heads, and, cropping up in the midst of them, a pair of feet and calves, encased in nailed shooting-boots and knickerbocker stockings, round which the fair heads swayed and bobbed with little screams and cacklings of delight, responsive to certain growling monosyllables which came up from the

heather, and intimated that the unseen "balance" of the feet and legs was a humorist, or person "who is *suck fun*." Other groups were "in the same fancy," and mirth reigned over all.

Cosmo, although almost crushed into callousness, still felt a relief that Esmè was not one of the devotees of the boots and stockings. She remained with the discreet group who had been about her at luncheon—consisting of a shaggy-looking elderly gentleman, an unattractive young lady, and the lady who had played such an obscuring part on the previous day, and in whom he now recognized Mrs. Ravenhall. None of them faced his way; and they were earnestly listening to the shaggy man, who appeared to prose, or at least to lecture, for he was not within ordinary ear-shot. The commonest civility and manners ought now to have taken Cosmo round to pay his respects to his young hostess, and to the only other lady whom he knew in the party. He felt this only too well; but he was rooted to the spot, and not merely sensible of his *gaucherie*, but also of the almost grotesque isolation in which he sat, attempting to carry it off by a ghastly semblance of interest in the structure of a blue-bell, which he peered into and held up to the light, as if its calyx were pregnant with botanical mystery. Lord Germistounne, with his back turned to him, still hammered away to the French gentleman, a good deal in the vein of our Transatlantic cousins when on their favorite theme of "American institutions." But his conversation came to an end at last, and with it some commencement of relief for Cosmo.

Lord Germistounne's "finish" was in this way: "Vous savez, M. le Marquis, que chez nous—chez les Écossais—il y a des—des—choses!—Je prétends qu'il existe, entre le seigneur Écossais et ses vassaux, un certain lien qu'on ne trouve nullement d'ailleurs. Moi, par exemple, j'aime mon peuple comme père, comme roi. Mon peuple, de leur part, entretient, à mon égard, une espèce de fanatisme; il me regarde comme un être tout-puissant, illustre, et fier. En même temps, ils trouvent, ces pauvres gens, que pour eux, je suis d'une tendresse tout à fait paternelle. Je le suis. Ils ont raison, ces pauvres gens. Mais—What the devil is that man M'Arde about? What are you about, you great blundering jackass? Go away, sir! Get out of my sight! Where's Hammond? How often have I told him to bring up a proper number of footmen on these occasions? The idea of an infernal savage like you tumbling about here, among ladies and valuable china! Be off, sir! Why do you stand staring there? Where the devil is Hammond?" Hammond not putting in an appearance, his lordship jumped up, and hastily introducing Cosmo to the marquis, went off to deal with him who was answerable for the appearance of poor M'Arde—a gillie who, acting as an improvised waiter, had walked into a mayonnaise with one foot, and, with the other, finally subdued the fortress which had made so stout a resistance to the impact of Mr. Ruggles.

The marquis was a good deal mystified by this discrepancy between the theory of the patriarchal relation and its development in practice; but he was too polite to show his feelings, and merely said, with a smile, as he looked after the angry old gentleman, "C'est une plaisanterie—un petit

jen de Papa—one jock, n'est ce pas, monsieur?" to which Cosmo assented, and, relieved to have some one to talk to at last, at once entered on the subject of the day's sport. This was the marquis's first experience of grouse-shooting, and he had enjoyed it very much; he had exploded, he said, many *cartouches*, and felt pretty confident that he had severely wounded several birds, though none had exactly fallen. But he confided to Cosmo that the actual nature of the grouse involved a disappointment. He had expected to see in it an aggravated sort of eagle—larger and more ferocious than the ordinary type; and when he belted on his *couteau de chasse* in the morning, had regarded that weapon as the possible instrument of his deliverance in a death-struggle with the awful bird of prey.

This kind of *chasse*, therefore, he found to be deficient in the element of glory, and so far disappointing, though in other respects entitled to rank respectably among the sports with which he was familiar, including the pursuit of the *merle* and the *alouette*, which latter he described as "une espèce de gibier fort difficile;" and then he prattled on with amazing zest and volubility, which so many Frenchmen bestow on *le sport* in all its developments, and which often make one wonder at the small amount of wool which is connected with all this vociferous cry. To Cosmo the marquis was a real relief, and at first he gave him all the attention which he had bestowed on the blue-bell; but presently certain movements took place in the party which caused his attention to flag, and soon drew it off, definitively, to other objects.

The "humorist," who, as far as the general public were concerned, had been for a long time represented by his boots and stockings alone, at last finished his cigar, and rose lazily to a sitting posture, displaying, among the fair damsels who encompassed him, a yawning indifference which suggested the idea of a sultan bored in the zenana, or the "herald of the morn" getting under way for his morning stroll, or, what the humorist actually was, a great *parti*, carelessly dispensing with attentions always at his disposal, and therefore cheap as the cigar-butt which he had just flung away. Cosmo beheld his resurrection, and recognized the individual whose striped raiment and general objectionableness had attracted his anxious attention on the previous day. This was Lord Ribston, of whom Tom Wyedale had spoken. Cosmo did not know him, but shrewdly connected Tom's remarks with what he had himself observed on the terrace and what he now saw, and felt that he beheld the peer who was "schemed for" by Mrs. Crock, but vainly, his noble aspirations being otherwise directed. He was very good-looking, though deficient of that "weary look about the eyes" without which we feel that a high-born and much-hunted *parti* is scarcely justified in intruding himself into the pages of a novel.

There was nothing of this sort about Lord Ribston, who was a fine animal, of tall stature, with broad shoulders and a fine healthy complexion, and rich, dark, curly hair, and full of that kind of vigor of well-fed youth when digestion is unimpeded by a single care. He was, moreover, a man who, being pretty confident of having his own way, and when and how he liked it—particularly among women—was, naturally

enough, in the habit of consulting nothing but his own convenience or caprice in regulating his actions. Thus, though it may at once be admitted that he was smitten with Esmè, and though, therefore, he might naturally have been expected to devote himself to her on the present occasion, he yet, as we have seen, did nothing of the sort. He had a philosophical conviction that one pleasure at a time is better than two or three commingled. He was also excessively fond of eating; and thus he had felt that he would be unable to enjoy his luncheon satisfactorily were his attention distracted by the immediate presence of his lady-love. Similarly, he had decided that the cigar of digestion would be more comfortably smoked in the attitude of the worshipped than in that of the worshipper. Hence his separation from Esmè during the meal; hence, too, the tableau of boot and stocking which had supervened.

But the pleasures of the table being exhausted, and the pleasant addenda of smoke and incense having had their share of attention, his mind reverted to Esmè, but not, by any means, with the anxiety of a lover who fears that his absence may involve forgetfulness, or another's opportunity. Lord Ribston was superior to any vulgar tremors of that sort; it simply now occurred to him that it would be a pleasant thing to go and look at Esmè's pretty face, and that the artless music of her voice would soothe him, after the harsh *fanfares* of forced laughter. Therefore he arose, regardless of the frank remonstrances of his satellites, and rolled his fine bulk leisurely over to the group which was still hanging upon the utterances of the shaggy senior.

This gentleman, who represented the "man of distinction" or "topic of the day" element, was purring away about fossiliferous strata and the Cambrian schists, and was listened to by Esmè, because she was amiable and his hostess, by Mrs. Ravenhall as Esmè's body-guard, and by Miss Milkington—the complementary young lady—because, being dreary and unattractive, and, generally speaking, "out of the swim," she had nothing else to do. He was a bore, however, and perhaps, therefore, deserved extinction, though scarcely in the abrupt manner in which it was administered by Lord Ribston.

"If," the *savant* was saying—"if we hold, with Sir Roderick, and argue from the condition of these schists"—when his lordship plumped down in the middle of the group, and remarked,

"What's a schist? Anything good to eat? By-the-bye, Miss Douglas, let me congratulate you on the luncheon—best done thing I've seen for ages. How we're to shoot after it, I don't know." To which Esmè made a suitable reply, and then said to the discomfited "topic of the day,"

"You were telling us, Dr. Pentacle, that Sir Roderick Murchison—"

"I was simply going to remark that if we hold, with Sir Roderick, that the phenomena exhibited by these schists—"

But the word "schist" was intolerable to Lord Ribston; he put his foot down upon it. "For Heaven's sake, Dr. Pentacle!" he cried, "let us off the schists till the smoking-room to-night. I don't think violent language of that sort ought to be used before ladies. Do you, Mrs. Ravenhall?"

"How rude you are, Lord Ribston!" said

Mrs. Ravenhall, with an appearance of suppressing laughter which wounded the *savant* more than Ribston's brutality, so that he rose and left them, saying meekly that they must forgive an old pedagogue for boring them with his unseasonable lore.

"Got his back up," said Lord Ribston.

"Cruel of you!" said Mrs. Ravenhall.

"Serves him right, for boring Miss Douglas," quoth my lord.

"I shall go," said Esmè, rising, "and beg him to tell me about Sir Roderick's theory; it is *most* interesting;" and in this way, having snubbed the snubber, she was going to leave them, when Lord Germistoun—who had returned from worrying Hammond—was observed to meet the professor, and to take him by the arm, and to carry him off toward the top of the knoll, no doubt giving him plenty of new ideas about the Old Red Sandstone, etc., etc.—for Lord Germistoun was many-sided, had an opinion upon every subject, and was always right.

"You must postpone *that* pleasure, Miss Douglas," said Lord Ribstone, ignoring the fact that Esmè was displeased; "but, seriously, do you care to know about schist, and that kind of thing?"

"I think it is always interesting to hear a man talk about a subject which he really understands."

"Ah! now I shall know how to interest you; what I've always wished to do. But do you know, Miss Douglas, I think it is rather difficult to interest you."

"Do you find me *blasé*?" laughed Esmè.

"No, no, not that; but you don't seem to care about things—you know what I mean."

"Not quite, Lord Ribston; because I do care about a great many things."

"One can interest these others" (with a wave of his hand in the direction of his recent disciples) "about anything; but it's different with you. Yet, somehow, I like your way best; only I *should* like to interest you. Help me, Mrs. Ravenhall, with an idea. How can I interest Miss Douglas?"

"Perhaps Tom can help us. Here, Tom! Tom!" to her brother, who was hovering about from group to group.

"Well, what's the matter?"

"Come and sit down here. We are in committee; we want an idea, and you must help us."

"I'll give you an idea; without sitting down, though, because I'm going to see the keeper about my afternoon beat."

"Well, what is it?"

"It's quite frank, I warn you."

"Well?"

"It is simply this, that the Twelfth of August is sacred to grouse, and not to small-talk, and that it is high time for us to be taking the hill."

Esmè laughed. "How deliciously in earnest you are, Mr. Wyedale!" she said.

"I am, you know," cried Tom, in his eager, aggravated sort of way; "but don't you think I am right? I know you do, because you believe in earnestness. I look at it in this way, don't you see: I can't well have more than thirty-five or forty 'Twelfths,' at best. Half of these, at least, will be wet, and the other half will be eaten into by illness, the want of a moor, and other accidents. Altogether, it's extremely improba-

ble that I shall have more than two or three such anniversaries of the day as this in the course of my life. So I'm all for a start. Come, Ribston, here's my idea—you get up and help me to agitate for a move. You are a swell, and will be listened to. Come, *carpe diem*!"

"Carp it yourself, old fellow."

"Tom, you positively *are* a savage!" cried his sister. "What you really mean is to drive us all home."

"Not a bit of it; I should recommend you to stay here and enjoy the mountain air."

"All by ourselves?"

"There are no bandits about; besides, you'll have old Spectacles or Binnacles, or whatever he calls himself, and all the other cripples, to look after you."

"A tempting programme, indeed! Come, Tom, sit down."

"I'll move in twenty minutes, Wyedale," said Lord Ribston.

"You shall," cried Tom; "and in the mean time I'll go and see the keeper."

"No, no, Tom," urged his sister; "sit down and amuse us. We were getting rather *triste*. Come."

"No, I can't; but I'll find a substitute. There's poor Glencairn being bored to death by the marquis. Look at his wistful glances! Quite a charity to release him. Hi! Cosmo! Wanted! Come here! Ladies want you!"

So Tom went off, and so, at last, there was nothing left for Cosmo but to harden his heart, and go across to the spot at which he had been steadily glaring ever since Lord Ribston had flung his free-and-easy form into the group. Most embarrassing at best to meet Esmè! but to meet her now, thus, covered with the ignominy of demonstrated clownishness, was too overpowering. How he got across he could never have told you. Suffice it that the feat was performed, and that he presently found himself sitting pretty calmly beside Esmè and opposite to Mrs. Ravenhall, who greeted him with effusion, and opposite Lord Ribston, who, not knowing him, scanned him all over with that look of disapproving inquiry which the youth of the day bestows upon a stranger. There was a certain repose, and, at the same time, a frank, unself-consciousness, in Esmè's manner which was charming and reassuring even to a wretch in Cosmo's condition; and though there were tones in her voice (for it is the *voice* of the charmer which is her most potent charm) which, now and then, set his pulses galloping, its ordinary flow was melodiously sedative.

Esmè made no remark upon his tardy homage, but said, very heartily, that she was glad he had made up his mind to come to the Highlands, after all.

"It must have been *quite* a surprise for Mr. Wyedale," she said, "for he was only yesterday talking about Finmore, and about you; and he said—didn't your brother say, Mrs. Ravenhall, that Mr. Glencairn had gone to Melbourne to observe the transit of Venus?"

"Oh! Tom says anything that comes into his head, as I am sure you know, Mr. Glencairn."

"Yes," said Cosmo, laughing, "Tom deals very largely in metaphors and hyperboles."

"But I *really* believed him," cried Esmè, "because"—she was thinking of the moonlight

interview at the Villa Bianca, but paused and finished her sentence otherwise than she had intended, saying, "because he *did* appear quite grave and positive. I am sure," she added, smiling, "that this is a much better place to be in than Melbourne."

"Ah, indeed it is!" cried Cosmo.

"You liked Finmore when you had it last, did you not?" How pleasantly she seemed to remember things!

"I liked it extremely," said Cosmo; "and," plucking up spirit, "I mean to like it still more this time."

"I hope you will; but are you all alone?"

"Yes; the fact is, I took it quite on an impulse, and had no time to get up a party, even if I had wished to do so."

"I think you are very much given to impulses, Mr. Glencairn," she said, with a smile.

"I—I don't know that I am."

"You were in an impulse of departure when I last saw you, and, now that I meet you again, you have just arrived by impulse."

"Ah, yes," stammered Cosmo. "Of course—yes, to be sure—Cadenabbia—business—London—ahem! ahem!—things that very decidedly—yes!" and lost his head and broke down; and Esmè also became rather confused, recalling all the revelations which had preceded his announcement of departure, and fearing that he might suspect her of insinuating some banter concerning them.

This pause was taken advantage of by Lord Ribston, who by this time had decided that Cosmo wasn't "his form," and that he hated the sight of him.

"Did you like Cadenabbia, Miss Douglas?" he asked.

"Oh yes, so very much!"

"I suppose there was plenty of schist there!" and this being a joke and also a sarcasm, his lordship laughed inordinately.

"We had plenty to amuse and occupy us without schist," said Mrs. Ravenhall. "We had something new to do almost every day—Miss Douglas and Lord Germistoun, and Tom and I."

"How did Wyedale stand it?" asked Lord Ribston, lazily.

"Stand it!" cried Mrs. Ravenhall, with a look full of meaning. "Tom felt his good fortune in being there, I can assure you. I never saw Tom so happy, *never*; and so sorry to come away, although I must say we all enjoyed the Engadine very much—quite as much, indeed, I think."

"What! have you all been caravanning about together the whole summer?" cried Lord Ribston.

"Yes; we have been *quite* inseparable, have we not, dear Esmè?"

"Yes, I am glad to say that we have. It has been delightful being with you."

"It could not be more so to you than it has been to *us*," with another look at Lord Ribston, which was meant to express, "so you needn't hope to upset what you can see is a cosy little family arrangement—nearly as good as settled."

And his lordship did look a little reflective, and pondered over Tom's relations with the family, which were certainly a little puzzling, and to some minds might have been suggestive. Cos-

mo, too, did not *quite* like the ring of Mrs. Ravenhall's voice, but was in too pure an atmosphere of bliss, thus seated beside Esmè, after all these months of absence and longing, to be disturbed at present, though probably Mrs. Ravenhall's words might come back to him in the lonely evening, and not exactly as a soporific.

For some ten minutes the conversation went on in the same sort of vein, principally in dialogue between Esmè and Cosmo, relieved by occasional flashes of humor from Lord Ribston, who sprawled at Esmè's feet, and gazed into her face with looks of the frankest admiration; while Mrs. Ravenhall "watched the case" for her brother, interpolating such occasional remarks as she thought might tend to his interests, or to the discomfiture and disadvantage of the two other men. It was brought to a close at last by the arrival of Lord Germistoun, whom Tom had got hold of and brought over to his way of thinking.

"Now, Mrs. Ravenhall," he cried, "you know it is 'the Twelfth'—that is to say, the only day in the year which has not for its motto 'Place aux dames,' so I hope you will not think me a bear, when I tell you that the carts are ready for you, and that *we* must be starting, which we can't do till we have packed you comfortably and seen you off."

Whereupon Mrs. Ravenhall jumped up with the greatest alacrity, vowing that, for the last hour, his lordship's extraordinary kindness in allowing them to remain so long had been a marvel to her; and then they moved toward the carts, Esmè detaining her father for a moment to say,

"Poor Mr. Glencairn is all alone at Finmore, papa; wouldn't it be kind to ask him to dinner?"

"Tut! tut! tut! impossible. We shan't be home till nine. No compliment to ask him to dine on a day like this."

"Ah! I forgot; perhaps not. But you might ask him for to-morrow, and then he would see the gillies' ball too."

"Ahem! well, there is no positive objection to that—no *positive* objection, that I can see. Yes, I'll ask him. He's no addition to a party, though—silent and stupid. He hadn't a word for me at luncheon to-day."

So, when they overtook the party, Lord Germistoun tendered his invitation, and it is needless to say that Cosmo joyfully accepted it, notwithstanding the fussy austerity of manner with which it was offered. Then Lord Ribston, true to his system of one joy at a time, left the ladies' departure to be superintended by others, and went away to see about his beat, with the parting injunction to Esmè to take old Pentacle in the cart with her, and, if possible, work out the Cambrian schists before dinner, so as to give him the chance of an evening's innings; and Lord Germistoun having detached Mrs. Ravenhall, Cosmo had five minutes in heavenly *tête-à-tête* with Esmè.

"I am so glad you can come to-morrow," said the latter, "although it is an uncomfortable hour for dinner. You must know that to-morrow is my birthday, and the people always have a dance to celebrate that great occasion; and as we like to go and see them for a little, we are obliged to dine early. I am afraid the shooters will grumble dreadfully."

"What! on your birthday?" cried Cosmo.

"I fear that will scarcely console them; and, indeed, it is rather a pity that we must have it on that night; but it would not do to disappoint the poor people, for they have been accustomed to have their annual dance ever since I was born."

Cosmo made a terribly buckram speech, which sounded, even in his own ears, exactly like an extract from 'Pamela,' to the effect that "the man who, on such a day, could grudge," etc., etc.

Esmè laughed, and said, "Then I may count upon your gallantry, at all events, to support me against the grumblers. I shall be glad of an ally against Lord Ribston and Mr. Wyedale: they will be the most formidable—" and before Cosmo could cry out that these men must be soulless, and worthy of the tormentors, she changed the subject, and said, "I hope you can dance reels. We are all expected to perform once at least—even papa, who goes through the trial most heroically."

"I don't think I have ever quite danced a reel," said Cosmo; "but to-morrow night I am sure I shall be inspired. I shall succeed by one of those impulses you accuse me of."

"Oh, Mr. Glencairn!" cried Esmè, with a quick change of manner, "I want to say to you that I hope you did not think me rude when I spoke about—about your going away from Cadenabbia on an impulse. If I had remembered, at the time, all you said to me that night in the garden, it would have been both rude and unkind; but I did not think of it at the moment—not till I fancied you were annoyed—"

"Annoyed, Miss Douglas! with you?"

"I thought so; and you might have been so, very reasonably; but I really spoke without thinking—not that I have ever forgotten what you told me that night; because," and she spoke warmly and earnestly, "I was very, very sorry for you—you were so unhappy, and for such an honorable reason" (honorable, indeed!); "but now, I hope, you quite understand that I did not mean to be rude."

Cosmo looked at her and smiled—and his smile was the great charm of his face—smiled dreamily, tenderly, worshippingly, and murmured some half-articulate commonplace, which had no meaning at all, being entirely lost in the eloquence of the look and the smile which accompanied it. Esmè did not at once withdraw her eyes from that mysterious regard. She could not. She felt a strange fascination, something between curiosity and some other emotion altogether new, which held her gaze and made the delicate color waver and come and go in her fair face. Silence followed for a few moments. Then Cosmo, who seemed to feel the value of time and opportunity, went back to the subject of the garden scene at the Villa Bianca, and said,

"I have often thought, Miss Douglas, with shame of the infliction to which I subjected you that night." (The serpent!)

"But I told you not to be ashamed; I told you that I was very much interested."

"You must have thought me so forward and eccentric," cried Cosmo, pressing the case against himself.

"I did think that you might have found a better confidante, but I said exactly what I meant. I said that I felt very much for your perplexities, which were so uncommon—at least they seemed

so to me—and—and" (here she made an effort to say what she could have said *without* an effort ten minutes ago, and she made the effort, as if determined not to admit the existence of any obstacle)—"and I have often wondered since what you would decide upon."

Cosmo felt that this was beatitude.

"You gave me your good wishes," he said, in a voice full of tremulous music; "and I felt, at the time, that that was an omen for good. I hope now that I have found the solution I was in quest of."

"Oh, I am so glad! May I know—may I be allowed to know what it is?"

"If you care to hear about it, it will be the greatest happiness to me to tell you."

But here they approached the rest of the party, and Esmè said,

"You will tell me to-morrow evening, perhaps."

"If you will listen to me, Miss Douglas. And oh, may I make one petition—that you will sing me again that song which you were singing on that same night when I came up, like an evil spirit, as you said, out of the lake to listen? It has been ringing in my ears ever since; for I always seem to hear it when I think of you."

Cosmo was certainly not losing much time. Esmè looked shyly up, and again met that indescribable gaze which puzzled and confused her, but which yet left some impression that was not akin to pain, and said, "If you can tell me what it was—what song you wished me to sing—I will gladly sing it for you;" and when she had said this, and received Cosmo's thanks, their eyes parted; but before they did so the lynx-vision of Mrs. Ravenhall detected the love-light which shone in Cosmo's, and she said to herself, bitterly, "Another of these *abominable* fortune-hunters!" Then the ladies were carefully assorted, and packed into their vehicles, and despatched—rather a sombre and silent party; for all the Euphrosynes suffered from reaction, and, indeed, every one must feel that old Pentacle and his brother cripples were rather a bathos after the boots and knickerbockers and intellectual charms of Lord Ribston. Esmè herself was silent and almost *distracte*. "You are tired, darling," said Mrs. Ravenhall. Esmè disclaimed fatigue. "I can see it," Mrs. Ravenhall insisted; "and it is not to be wondered at. You have been sacrificing yourself all day to the worst bores of the party. Just like your goodness; but your strength is not equal to it. Only fancy, dear Lady Bugles, after giving an hour to Miss Milkington, and at least an hour to Professor Pentacle, this sweet child must needs take pity on that dreary Mr. Glencairn, who must have been quite the *coup de grâce*, I should imagine."

"He looks dreary," said Lady Bugles—"very dreary. Who is he?"

"Who is he? Well, now you ask me, I don't think I quite know. Let me see. He used to live, as a youth, when he and Tom were at Eton and Cambridge together, with Colonel Wildgrave. You remember the Wildgraves, who had a house in Grosvenor Square? I think, but I am not positive, he used to be called Colonel Wildgrave's nephew. He succeeded to his fortune, certainly; but I have a hazy sort of impression that there was a mystery about him. Don't say I said it; but I almost fancy there was an idea that he was a foundling."

"He looks like a foundling," said Lady Bugles—"exactly like a foundling." Her ladyship's patent teeth were becoming rather obstreperous, and warned her that brevity, if not total silence, was advisable. Esmè made no comment upon these remarks about Cosmo, but simply repeated that she was not fatigued, had enjoyed the day immensely, and found no one a bore. Mrs. Ravenhall intimated her disbelief of this by a compassionate smile, confidentially imparted to Lady Bugles, and let the subject drop.

The reader will not have failed to observe that these protracted operations were undermining Mrs. Ravenhall's morale, and upsetting the principles upon which her social success was built. Convinced of the imbecility and risk of indulging in backbiting as a pastime, which is inevitably to rouse against one's own reputation secret, and therefore incalculable, forces of retaliation and injury, she would have been incapable, two months ago, of committing herself to such reckless remarks as she had now made about Cosmo. But the continuousness of the strain was becoming severe; and it must be owned that the way in which new aspirants kept cropping up was trying. In two months there had been Count Fori and Lord Ribston, besides a shoal of smaller fry, who had been eyed down or otherwise summarily dealt with. And now, here, evidently, was Cosmo, who, her instinct told her, was the most dangerous of all, and therefore to be counteracted by the strongest measures. Hence the "foundling" myth.

How she found herself at Dunerlacht, by-the-bye, requires explanation. She and Tom had remained with the Germistounes at Pontresina till the last days of July, and had come home with them to London, where the party had broken up with many mutual regrets. But their separation was of the briefest duration. On arriving at Ravenhall, she found that her husband, resenting his long deprivation of conjugal solace and observance, had accepted, by way of reprisal, a bachelor invitation to shoot grouse and stalk deer in the Highlands for a month, and that he was on the very eve of departure for the North.

"What," she had asked, "is to become of me?" and had received, by way of reply, a generous permission to remain at home and "look after matters." But this was not her idea of the fitness of things; and by a happy inspiration she had written a charming little comico-pathetic letter to Lord Germistoun describing her forlorn situation—made doubly desolating by the too, too happy days she had recently passed in his lordship's society, and "quite frankly" begging him to allow her to accompany Tom and inflict herself upon Dunerlacht for a few days, until "her other engagements in the North fell due." She said nothing about all this to Mr. Ravenhall, who went away in a fool's paradise, chuckling over his wife's impending incarceration at home; and he had not been gone much more than a day when a letter arrived from Lord Germistoun, backed by one from Esmè, welcoming Mrs. Ravenhall's invasion with the most satisfactory cordiality. The results of which were, that Tom received the same afternoon, in town, a telegram which caused his countenance to fall, and drew from him the remark, "That woman's horrible energy will be the death of me! By heavens! she's becoming a regular Old Man of the Sea;"

and that the same night he and his adroit incubins were dashing away northward together in the "Flying Scotsman."

Thus was Mrs. Ravenhall again in the field, facing, as she felt, severe odds, and not likely to stick at a trifle, either in word or deed. A pursuit of the sort, to an intriguing nature, increases in interest and excitement as it progresses, and even as difficulties multiply; and success comes to be valued in the abstract, as the triumph of skill and endurance, independently of the solid advantages which it represents.

CHAPTER XXV.

OLD DAVIDSON was at once struck with a change which had come over his master, when he rejoined him at the march. With his head in the air, and a light step, Cosmo came swinging over the heather, and greeted the old keeper with a genial smile and a playful apology for his long absence. "Never mind, Davidson," he cried, "give me my gun, and we'll see if we can't make up for lost time. I don't mean to let many of them off this afternoon, I promise you." And he was as good as his word. What a pace he walked at! The dogs ranged wide, and covered a deal of ground, but he was up to the points like lightning. Juno had no anxieties. The fleet foot and the unerring barrels were always "there." The bag swelled perceptibly.

"We'll hae to ca' canny wi' thae hares, captain, if me and Anna's to get a'thing hame oorsels. An' ye gang on nt this rate, sir, we'll hae to send for ane o' the pownies."

"Oh, I don't mean that you and Andrew shall be able to carry the bags home. You must make a depot somewhere soon, and send back for the stuff. I'm only just beginning."

Master and men were in the highest glee; and not till the sun had well set, and the dogs were dead beat, was the sport abandoned.

"What's the bag, Davidson?" Cosmo asked, when the keeper came in, at night, for orders.

Davidson's admiration of his master's afternoon performance was so sincere, that he was generous enough to suspend, temporarily, his disapprobation of his single-handed escapade. "Deed, sir, it's a tremendyus birds—jist tremendyus. Fuffy-sax brace grouse, acht blue hares, three snipe, and a juke!"

"After all, not so bad for 'ae gun,' eh, Davidson?"

"It's a tremendyus birds to ne gun. There's naeboddy fit to tak and contradict that—that's conseederin' a' things—maist feck o' banf the day lost, and your hert no' in it (beggin' your paurdon, sir) the fore pert o' the dny. Stull and with a', I maun say, that to dae justice to this mair—"

"Yes, yes, Davidson, I know all about that. We'll get your friend, Mr. Wydale, over to help us one of these days, and I've decided to ask a friend to come down from London to join me immediately. We'll shoot early to-morrow—start at eight sharp. I shall have to knock off at four. Good-night."

So Davidson went away greatly comforted: "Dod!" he confided to an underling, "he was clean sully in the mornin', but he bruskit up

brawly afterhin'. I doot they maun hae gien him something ower by at his lordship's—sh'mpeen, mibbee."

On his way home, Cosmo, inspired with a magical delight, which it would have been hard to analyze, but which excluded all considerations of prudence, policy, and so forth, glowed with philanthropy and all good-fellowship, and, in this happy frame, decided that it would be a kind thing to give poor Phil Denwick a chance of some fresh air and a run on the hills before he settled down to the routine of office life in London; and he now sat down and wrote, inviting him to come at once. "Bring your 'Ready Reckoner' with you," he said, "and other commercial implements, as well as your gun, and in this quiet place you will be able to mingle business with pleasure." Then he went to bed and slept the sleep of the blessed; and all night long, through the world of his dreams, this refrain seemed to echo,

"I strove against the stream, but all in vain;
Let the great river bear me to the main."

Another splendid day. From roseate dreams Cosmo awoke to behold the hills again blooming under an unclouded sky, and also to find that the sudden fabric of his own mysterious happiness had not been absorbed into some kindred vision of the night and had not departed along with it. As yet there was no reaction. Again to-day his vigor and energy on the moor were great—somewhat feverish, indeed; but if the rapidity of his movements symbolized his impatience to overpass the interval which separated him from Esmè, rather than the enthusiasm of sport, the material results were highly satisfactory; and when the hour for "knocking off" arrived, old Davidson's disapprobation of "anither o' thae hauf days" was softened by a bag of really imposing dimensions.

A full hour before it was necessary Cosmo returned to the lodge to dress for dinner; and though he did his best, as he thought, not to be premature, he reached the castle some time before any one appeared in the drawing-room. It was a fine old house, in all respects worthy to be the seat of an ancient and historical family. There were arms and armor enough in the entrance-hall and wainscoted gallery to equip a clan of fighting-men, and above these weapons quite a clan of portraits—of the warriors, doubtless, who had borne them, intermingled with those of the fair ladies who had inspired their deeds of chivalry. In the drawing-room some of the best of the family pictures were hung; and Cosmo amused himself for a quarter of an hour in inspecting them, and tracing the origin, development, and recurrence of this and that peculiarity of feature which formed, as one so often sees, a connecting-link between many generations. By one of these pictures his attention was strongly arrested. Strange to say, it was not the portrait of a peerless dame whose features had been reproduced in her latest female descendant.

We feel that this is what it ought to have been; but it was quite otherwise, being the representation of a rather grim and haughty-looking cavalier—neither young nor specially handsome, but with a remarkable expression of concentration and power and purpose, which, indepen-

dently of the great merits of the picture, arrested the attention. Cosmo was impressed by all this, but by something more; for the moment he looked at it, he was struck with a feeling that he was familiar with the face, and must have seen the picture before. He walked from side to side, and got it into a variety of lights, trying to stimulate his memory. The cold, straightforward eyes of the cavalier followed him with that look of vital movement which pictures borrow from the movements of the beholder. Cosmo could by no means remember where he had seen it before, but he was more and more convinced of his familiarity with the face. He could almost have sworn that he had seen the eyes, and, indeed, all the features, at some former time, and when they were animated in conversation. Vivid, however, as the impression was, the antique dress of the figure told him at once that the recognition was purely fanciful. A movement took place in the room behind him; but as he was engaged in shifting his position he did not observe it.

"I seem to know you, my friend," he said aloud, and looking at the picture, "and, indeed, you almost look as if you knew me. Who are you?" He approached nearer, and read on the lower parts of the frame,

"Sir Alan Douglas—slain at the battle of Philliphaugh. Anno 1645."

A little before my time," he said, with a smile.

There was a musical laugh behind him, and a voice said, "And I fear I am a little behind mine, Mr. Glencairn." He turned and saw Esmè, looking, he thought, lovelier than he had ever seen her before—dressed, as he had never seen her before, for the evening, which enhanced, if possible, her beauty, and developed new charms. The little incident that he had been overheard in a whimsical soliloquy gave a certain pretext for his confusion at meeting her, and he soon recovered his self-possession.

"I fancied," he said, "that I had found an old acquaintance; but I have never been in this room before, and it is not likely, I suppose, that this picture has been elsewhere?"

"No," said Esmè; "I don't think it is likely that it has ever left this house; but it is considered a very good picture, and attracts every one's attention."

"I suppose, then," said Cosmo, "I have been merely experiencing the 'sentiment of pre-existence.' There are some very fine pictures here."

"Nothing but family pictures. Some of them are said to be good, and, of course, they are all interesting to us; but I suspect that the whole collection would scarcely bear the inspection of a critic like you. I have not forgotten our conversation at Cadenabbia."

"If I pretended to be a critic, Miss Douglas, I was an impostor, and now denounce myself. By-the-bye, I have not been able in any of these pictures to trace a resemblance to you. I see Lord Germistonne, more or less, in several generations; but you are quite original."

"That ought to be gratifying, I suppose," laughed Esmè.

"There is, however, a picture—I have seen it often—which was recalled to my mind the moment I saw you at Cadenabbia. It has been a great favorite of mine for years. It is by Sasso-

ferrato—a Madonna—and you might have sat for it. So that you see, after all, you are not quite original."

"Where is this picture?"

"In a collection—rather misplaced—in a village named Montestretto, in Italy. I have made various pilgrimages to see it. It took a great possession of my imagination. I used to amuse myself by putting together the characteristics which I thought would be suitable to such a face."

"And I am so very like it?"

"It is your portrait."

"And the characteristics? But of course you don't know me well enough to answer that question."

"Oh, indeed I do."

"You must be a wizard then, Mr. Glencairn, or at least a clairvoyant," laughed Esmè.

"Not at all; but I am convinced that you have exactly the same characteristics as I gave to the picture."

"But how?"

"I cannot exactly tell; partly from what I have seen of you, perhaps, and partly by instinct."

"I hope—" but Esmè stopped, blushing as she met Cosmo's gaze, and was perhaps rather relieved when Lord Germistounne stalked into the room, with his pompous "How do you do, sir? how do you do?"

There was no fussiness in his manner now; it was pure austerity.

"I have been admiring that picture of your ancestor, Sir Alan Douglas, Lord Germistounne," said Cosmo.

"It is a good picture. We have always thought highly of it. Ah, my dear Mrs. Crock, here you are! I am glad to see that you are still alive. I was watching you in that last game of tennis with Lord Ribston. Your agility is marvellous—distinctly marvellous. I almost think you are one too many for Ribston."

Mrs. Crock devoutly hoped that in another sphere she might prove to be so, but disclaimed athletic superiority, and announced that she was perfectly fresh, and meant to dance any quantity of reels that evening.

"They are so inspiring and picturesque and delightful," said Mrs. Ravenhall, who now flowed into the room; "we must all dance them."

"Any dance which Mrs. Ravenhall dances must be picturesque and delightful," said Lord Germistounne. Mrs. Ravenhall dropped a playful courtesy, and challenged his lordship to be her partner. This privilege, however, could not be conceded. Lord Germistounne explained that his reel-dancing was rather an affair of state, and that the honor of his partnership was, by a sort of feudal arrangement, always conferred upon the wife of the oldest tenant on the estate—a certain Mrs. M'Haffie. Mrs. Ravenhall affected to pout; Mrs. Crock vowed she should be consumed with jealousy of the farmer's wife; and even Lady Bugles, who had now arrived, was understood, by a sort of whistling sound (for two of the incisors *had* gone), that Mrs. M'Haffie's monopoly was afflictive to her.

The rest of the party arrived by degrees; dinner was announced, and Lord Germistounne marched off with a very deaf dowager, notifying to Mrs. Ravenhall that he *insisted* upon having

her support on his other hand at table, with a slight imploring gesture which seemed to place her in a delightful antithesis not merely to the deaf dowager, but also to the rest of the party. Yet, though this was a distinction which might well have preoccupied a head less cool, it did not prevent Mrs. Ravenhall (who had studied the order of march and precedence with Esmè) from whispering to the young lady to whom Cosmo had been assigned, "Remember that Mr. Glencairn is *quite* worth your attention; ten thousand a year; matrimonially inclined; a score of people dying to marry him. I advise you to make the most of the opportunity." And, thus incited, Miss Hungerford-Snapsley "went for" the "foundling" (which sobriquet, born of Mrs. Ravenhall's reckless speech in the cart, had been adopted as appropriate by the young ladies in divan assembled) with the skill and determination which seven seasons of sedulous practice supply, and tried him all round, and in every vein, and in every class of topic, beginning with religious æsthetics and ending with riskier subjects, such as modern stage millinery. She gave him of her fulness, but nothing from her cornucopia seemed to interest the "foundling." He was *distrain*, forever answering at random, and often at cross-purposes.

"Anticipated! The wretch is in love!" this astute maiden said to herself, and promptly gave him up, and consoled herself by "having a round," for practice' sake, with a very young Oxford lad, son of the deaf dowager to whom Lord Germistounne was in thrall. Cosmo could scarcely help being *distrain*, considering all things; for, though far away, Esmè was in full view, and his eyes were turned in her direction as often as was permissible within the limits of a not very vigilant prudence. The classic grace of her small head, with its rich auburn hair, whose luxuriance could not be concealed by the severest simplicity of arrangement; the brightness and kindness of her smile; the patrician grace of her fair neck; and a hundred charms of movement, pose, and expression—all so artless, but so full of unstudied harmony—might well fascinate the gaze of artistic perception quickened by the power of love. No wonder Miss Snapsley found herself, as she afterward complained to Mrs. Ravenhall, "quite out in the cold."

Lord Ribston sat beside Esmè, but seemed rather sluggish and sleepy (which was just as well), and most of her conversation was given to the gentleman on her other hand, whom Cosmo could not see, but knew to be delightfully old and infirm, so that there was little to disturb his pleasant waking dream, albeit carried on in the midst of twenty-five banqueters. The dinner passed off like other dinners of the sort, the only public incident being the arrival of Tom Wyedale when it was half over. He had, of course, been unable to tear himself away from the ground at the proper time, and now arrived, hurried but nonchalant, and marched up to make his apologies to Esmè, "as if," Lord Ribston thought, "the whole place belonged to him." In his hand he bore a bouquet of wild-flowers, which he smelled jauntily as he marched up the room. These (a collection made that afternoon by Mrs. Ravenhall) he presented to Esmè with a comic air of reverence, and cried,

"It is shocking, Miss Douglas, to be late upon your natal day; but it would have been shocking-er to be in time, yet without a birthday offering. Deign to accept these humble flowerets. Let them plead my excuse."

"Oh, Mr. Wyedale, how kind of you! how beautiful they are! how very, very good of you to think of getting them for me, and actually to sacrifice some of your shooting to gather them! I know what the sacrifice *must* have been, and therefore understand the full value of the offering. Thank you so very much! It is a most appropriate bouquet for a Highland ball!"

And then Tom went gayly to his seat with a grin of suppressed meaning, but was presently damped by finding that his sister's eyes were pouring upon him the lava of burning wrath and contempt. Was it for this public exhibition, this travesty, that she had furtively toiled and over-fatigued herself in the glen that afternoon? Tom was, to use the mildest expression, a hopeless marplot.

The ladies had not very long left the dining-room, when Lord Germistoun rose, and said he must go to see the factor about some arrangements which he had forgotten; the gentlemen might, however, do exactly as they pleased. Those who wished to join the ladies might now do so, while those who desired more wine might remain. "It is Liberty Hall," said his lordship; "and since that *viveur* Wyedale will stick to the bottles as long as he can, I leave him in command here," and so departed.

Then Cosmo displayed real generalship; for, finding Professor Pentacle (who now sat next him) to be in a rapture of prose about a Roman urn which had been recently dug up somewhere, and was to be seen in one of the public rooms of the castle, he encouraged the *savant*, by a fraudulent show of interest, to enlarge on the theme, and at last vowed that he was possessed with a burning desire to see the vessel in question—and at once; and did Dr. Pentacle know exactly where the treasure was? The doctor did; and since neither he nor Cosmo wanted any more wine, they most naturally went to inspect it. It was found in a glass cabinet in an octagon room which formed the interior of one of the flanking towers, and terminated a suite of drawing-rooms opening one from another. Here there was an organ as well as a piano; and these and other symptoms announced that the room was sacred to music. It was now, however, empty; and the professor, getting hold of the urn, and opening a lecture which promised to be formidable, Cosmo began to feel that he was in for a bad time of it. But (was there ever anything like the luck of this fortunate fellow?) Lady Bugles and another dame had expressed a wish to see the music-room just at the proper moment, and, when Pentacle was in full and ardent cry, entered the room, followed by their young hostess.

"What is going on here?" whistled Lady Bugles; "a lecture?"

"Yes," cried Cosmo, "a most interesting one;" and when he had manœuvred Lady Bugles and the other lady into the position of an audience, he manifested the sincerity of his interest by at once dropping from the circle and joining Esmè, who had gone to pick up some music which lay on the floor, at the other side of the room.

"This is the music-room, of course?" said Cosmo.

"Yes; and it is a very good room for it, and very easy to sing in."

"May I venture to remind you of a promise which you made to me yesterday?"

"What is it? Oh, the song! Certainly. I will perform my promise, if you wish; but have we time? And sha'n't we disturb the professor?"

"Nothing disturbs the professor," said Cosmo, confidently; "and there is an hour to spare before the ball, or nearly so."

"I wonder if the others are all amused? I must just go and see first."

She went, and returned, bringing with her the dreary Miss Milkington, who, gravitating naturally to the dreary, at once joined the Pentacle group.

"They are all very good," said Esmè, "and quite to be trusted in my absence; so now, if you can tell me which song you wish, I will sing it."

Cosmo described the first song she had sung on that enchanting evening by the lake. Then she sung it; and with its first notes all the scene where he had first heard it came back to him, and with it the recollection of that wild and stormy burst of revelation which had swept over his mind, evoked by the sound of her artless voice, as she sung this simple little lay:

"Spring breathed on Winter's ice and rime,
And freed the flowers from Winter's thrall,
And woo'd them on, that Summer prime
Might deck her bowers withal.

"Spring gave the song-bird back the song
That late in wintry durance lay;
Shall I, then, after waiting long,
My heart, again be gay?

"Alack! there is no Spring for thee—
Song died because the flowers were ta'en,
And all the wild-wood minstrelsie
Came with the flowers again.

"But to give back *thy* music lost,
It is not Spring that has the power;
Spring cannot touch the bitter frost
That holds thy captive flower."

When she ceased, Cosmo remained silent. Esmè looked up, and saw in his face a look of strange intensity which puzzled her.

"It does not bear repetition, I fear," she said; "and, besides, it is too melancholy. I know that you like melancholy songs *sometimes*; but not always, I hope."

"Oh, this song is beautiful! It is not melancholy; it is altogether delightful;" and with great earnestness he begged her to sing it again, which she eventually did, though rather under protest, and, when she had finished it, she remarked,

"I cannot understand, Mr. Glencairn, how you can say it is not melancholy."

"Whatever the air may be," cried Cosmo, "it touches me with associations—mysterious, perhaps, and strange as it may sound to you—which have nothing at all to do with sadness, but with everything that is delightful."

"Not gay, surely?" laughed Esmè.

"No, not gay; but gayety and happiness have not much to do with each other. I *must* get this song. What is its name?"

"It has no name; it is not published."

"Do you think I can get a copy anyhow?"

"I don't know whether there is a copy in existence. There never was more than one."

"How?" cried Cosmo.

"In fact," said Esmè, "I am afraid your approval is making me very conceited. I am going to make a confession which I have never made before; but you must keep my secret. I am afraid I composed the air myself."

Then, when Cosmo's raptures threatened to get beyond the bounds of discretion, Esmè checked him by saying, "So, you see, Mr. Glencairn, that, as I composed it for sad words, my feelings as a composer are not gratified when you insist that the air is not melancholy."

"Ah, but I fall back upon my associations! And, since the song is so much to me, will you think me too bold and too troublesome if I ask the composer to make me a copy?"

"Oh," cried Esmè, "I shall be delighted! I am too vain of your approval not to be delighted to copy it for you, if you *really* think it worth having. But you must keep my secret."

Worth having? her song and her secret! Two gifts in one too-blessed day! Surely his cup of happiness was running over! For the present, at all events, it was to receive no further drops of bliss.

"Ah, my dear child, *here* you are! We have been looking for you *everywhere*. I had no idea that you had retired to the music-room for a *duet*, ha! ha!" Cosmo and Esmè now, for the first time, observed that the Pentacle group had disappeared.

"Lord Germistounne is rather in a fuss, dear. He says we ought to be with the people by this time. I think you *really must* come now. He seemed quite to vex himself when he found you were not in the drawing-room with the others; and of course no one could *divine* where you were. I really think, darling, that you had better come."

"I am quite sure I had, dear Mrs. Ravenhall, if papa has begun to fuss. But where are the professor and Lady Bugles and Miss Milkington? They were here just now."

"Time flies fast on young birthdays, dearest. They have been in the drawing-room for half an hour; and indeed it was from them that I heard you *had* been here *ever* so long ago—so I came to look, quite as a forlorn-hope, I confess. I certainly did not expect to find you *still* here. Well, dear, do let us go. I suppose a gillie's ball is scarcely in your line, Mr. Glencairn. Are we to say good-night?"

Cosmo laughed rather heartily at Mrs. Ravenhall's very palpable ill-humor, knowing so well its cause, and replied,

"By no means. I really don't know, Mrs. Ravenhall, why a gillie's ball should not be in my line. I hope, on the contrary, to enjoy it extremely."

Mrs. Ravenhall looked unlovingly at him. He met her glance without anxiety; yet she was not the sort of woman one would choose as an enemy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

At the conclusion of our last chapter, Mrs. Ravenhall had just broken up, with a considerable display of animation, a *tête-à-tête* between Esmè and Cosmo, which had been pleasantly progressing in the music-room of Dunerlacht Castle. When she and they rejoined the rest of the party in the drawing-room, Lord Germistounne was not present, but returned shortly afterward, with many snave apologies for detaining them all. It would thus almost appear that Mrs. Ravenhall had drawn, to a considerable extent, on her imagination in describing his lordship's extreme vexation at Esmè's prolonged absence. Be that as it may, he certainly made no unpleasant remarks, but led the way to the grand function of the evening, in the blandest of moods.

The visit to the tenantry and gillies, on that annual occasion, was timed so as to take place at the conclusion of the supper, which formed part of the evening's entertainment; or, to speak more correctly, the supper did not technically terminate until the visit had been paid, and until, the healths of Esmè and her father having been toasted in their presence, a speech from the latter, acknowledging the compliment, had terminated with a formal invitation to commence the revels; for all the arrangements at Dunerlacht were as liturgical as possible.

The dance was to take place in a spacious barn forming part of the offices, which were close to the house, and had, at one time, been connected with it; the supper was served within the castle, in an ancient stone hall of imposing dimensions, which had stood, in the olden time, for the baronial hall of banquet. In a corridor in the vicinity of this apartment the party were met by Mr. McKenzie, the factor—a plethoric, red-faced man, with a very important manner—who, acting as a sort of marshal, formed them into a regular procession; and at the head of this, Lord Germistounne, who loved all sorts of pomp and ritual, placed himself, and gave his arm to Esmè, apologizing to the other ladies for this selection, on the ground that the entire proceedings were feudal, and therefore exempt from the social ordinances of modern life. A couple of pipers were then, after a good deal of tugging and jostling, got into their due position in front of his lordship, and all being ready, Mr. McKenzie placed himself in front of the minstrelsy, and gave a guttural shriek (echoed from the rear of the column by a miniature view-halloo from Tom Wyedale), and *herenpon*, in a storm of pipe-music, the procession started. As it entered the hall, another shriek from the factor brought the assembled guests—who, to the number of about a hundred, were ranged round two long tables—to their feet, and the party advanced, with immense solemnity, half-way down the hall, to a low platform, which was opposite the great central fireplace. The pipers marched on round the hall till they faced this *estrade*, when they halted, continuing to play while the party took their places on it. This done, the music was silenced by a signal from the factor, who then cried out, in Gaelic,

"You will give three great strong cheers for his lordship, and three more for Miss Esmè, and three more for the ladies and gentlemen—that

is nine altogether; and let there be no mistakes."

"Suas i! suas i! suas i! Hurrah! etc. A rithist! a rithist! sa rithist! Hurrah! etc. Aon nair eile! Hurrah! etc."*

The cheers were loud and hearty, and executed with only a few irregularities on the part of the females, noted by Mr. M'Kenzie, and brought home to the offenders by menacing gestures on his part, which seemed to produce a profound impression, the factor being evidently terrible and autocratic, as is the way of those who wield delegated authority. The people were then commanded to sit down, and a silence ensued—a silence of expectation—which lasted so long as to suggest that a hitch had taken place. And this was indeed the case; for it turned out that Mr. M'Haffie, the senior tenant, whose duty it now was to let off the speech of the evening, was so overwhelmed by the terrors of the situation that he had subsided into a state of partial coma, from which neither the remonstrances of his friends nor divers small "exhibitions" of whiskey had been as yet able to recover him.

"Mr. M'Haffie!" shouted the factor, sternly, but without effect. "Mr. M'Haffie!" he repeated in a still more dangerous voice; and when this also was unavailing, he descended into the body of the house, and, after a good deal of moral, and even physical, hustling, succeeded in getting the old fellow on to his legs, who at last, in a quivering voice, contrived to deliver himself as follows:

"My lord and Miss Esmè, and my lord and all the ither gentry—and—and Mr. M'Kenzie too—and the tinanry and ither folk. Miss Esmè was born to-day; and I do not mean that she was born this ferry day, but some years back: and it was a ferry good day for us that day when Miss Esmè was born" (cheers started by M'Kenzie); "and I will say, and we will aal be saying always in the glens, that she is the Flower of this Glens, and that is not a great deal, to be sure; but then I will say more, and say that she is the Flower of aal Scotland, for I suppose there is not annybody annywhere into this whole world that is like to Miss Esmè, and we aal love her, and we would aal die for her ferry gladly—and that is true, and iverybody kens that that is true" (loud uninspired cheers). "Miss Esmè, I am drinking to Miss Esmè's health and to her happiness, and may God bless you, Miss Esmè. My lord, his lordship was not born to-day, but it is a good day for us when we see you" (cheers led by factor); "and it is a ferry great honor to me to be his tinanry, and to every one here to be it; and I do not mean the leddies and gentlemen, because they are not the tinanry, but the tinanry; and he has been ferry good to us when the big spates was, and"—(here a long pause, no doubt of fruitless effort to recall other good deeds on the part of his lordship, interrupted at last by an impatient cheer from Mr. M'Kenzie, which sent the old fellow on with a jerk)—"and that was ferry good for us; and I hope, and we aal hope, that his lordship will live for a great long time; and when he is taken away—because I am afraid even his lordship himsel will have to be taken

away some day" (pursings of the factor's mouth and elevations of his eyebrows, as though this position were, perhaps, debatable, but in any case offensive)—"I hope that Miss Esmè will take a good nobleman for her husband; and it is ferry certain that aal the nobility will be trying to get her, so that she will be able to pick the best out of it, and bring a fine lord to be the lord at Dunerlacht; and I am drinking his lordship's health, and I do not mean Miss Esmè's husband, because it is too soon to be drinking at him to-night; but I mean our own lordship that is still alive and here to-night; and I could have said all this reader in the Gaelic, because I am an old man, and have not got anny book-learning; but that would not do, because it is not a genteel kind of language to be talking before the leddies and gentry; so I will say no moré to them, but I am drinking aal their healths, and Mr. M'Kenzie's too. Here is Miss Esmè and his lordship, and the ither leddies and gentry—and Mr. M'Kenzie too. Suas i! suas i! suas i! hurrah!" etc., etc.

When the cheering had subsided, Lord Germistoun stood forth, looking awfully feudal, and though one might have heard a pin drop, Mr. M'Kenzie shouted for silence in a terrible voice, and his lordship began, and spoke words stately and sonorous, being about as intelligible to the majority of his audience as if he had addressed them in Arabic.

"My good tenantry and friends, I am always glad to meet you on these annual occasions, and to receive these evidences of your loyalty and gratitude, which are as creditable to you as they are agreeable to me. It ought to be the wish of the lords of the soil to see their dependents happy. It is the duty of those dependents to be happy and grateful. I am distinctly anxious that my people should be contented and prosperous, and I am glad to say that you, my people, recognizing this, show yourselves to be happy, grateful, and obedient. To such seemly relations existing between us are due many of the blessings enjoyed on these estates. We have to be thankful that Radicalism is unknown in this district; we have to rejoice that the upas-tree of dissent has been uprooted here; we have to congratulate ourselves upon a head of game which shows proudly in the statistics of Northern sport; nor is it indifferent to me that the noble red deer descend into the arable parts of the property, with perfect confidence, and in enormous numbers, for this shows that my people welcome their presence, and regard them as a picturesque adjunct to our unrivalled scenery. This is as it ought to be; this is worthy of a humane and enlightened tenantry." (At this point the cheering being a little languid, Mr. M'Kenzie descended into the body of the hall and resolved himself into a sort of patrol of observation.) His lordship went on: "The feeling on these estates has always been, that what is good for the landlord is best for the tenant. It is this sentiment which guarantees the harmony of a community like ours, and I am glad to say that it continues unabated. While this is so, the voice of controversy and discontent will not disturb us; and while in other districts we have to deplore the progress of selfishness and disloyalty among the lower classes, here all will be peace, happiness, and contentment.

* "Up with it! up with it! up with it! Again! again! again! Once more!"

"My good tenantry, I am touched by the enthusiasm of your personal affection for Miss Douglas and myself. Miss Douglas, I may venture to assure you, is also touched.

"Mr. M'Haffie has permitted himself to indulge in certain rather irrelevant speculations as to the duration of my life, and as to certain arrangements for Miss Douglas, into which it may or may not be thought expedient to enter at some future time. I feel bound to say that Mr. M'Haffie did not display his usual discretion in making these remarks." (Here the factor "moved into position" near M'Haffie, and opened on him with a battery of indignant and scornful looks.) "I may say that they were wanting in that good taste and reverence which I have a right to expect from the oldest tenant on these estates." ("Hear! hear! hear!" from the factor.) "Mr. M'Haffie ought to remember that my life is in the hands of the Almighty, and that Miss Douglas's future destiny is not a subject which should be approached in a spirit of recklessness at any time, and least of all in my presence. Mr. M'Haffie has distinctly disappointed me to-night. I am willing, however, to forget the incident, in the expectation that he will probably refrain from such ebullitions for the future."

There was very little doubt that Mr. M'Haffie would. The poor old man, though he but half understood his lordship's tremendous sentences, was horribly aware that he was, so to speak, in the dock; and sat, the picture of conscious guilt, rolling his eyes fearfully from his lord to the factor, who was glaring and puffing at him, like a cobra about to strike.

"And now, my friends," his lordship concluded, "you will do me the favor to go and spend a happy evening in the ballroom which has been prepared for you, and where I shall have the satisfaction of visiting you in a few minutes. Mr. M'Kenzie, have the goodness to conduct the tenantry at once to the ballroom."

The factor, with the assistance of some of his subordinates, got the people away with great promptitude, moving them off in single file by successive benches; and when all had departed, Lord Germistounne led his guests round the hall, and explained it to them, architecturally and historically.

Mrs. Ravenhall thought it was "quite too delightfully mediæval." "I can see," she exclaimed, "the knights in armor ranged around these tables."

"I can distinctly see them," said Lady Bugles. "How are they looking?" cried Lord Ribston—"pretty jolly?"

"Do sit down, Lord Ribston," murmured Mrs. Crook, "and then I shall know exactly how the knights looked."

"Am I your idea of a knight—of—old, Mrs. Crook?" laughed Lord Ribston.

"Don't fish for compliments, Lord Ribston," replied the widow, with a glance which made any sort of fishing superfluous.

"This hall," said Lord Germistounne, "served also as the baronial court of justice, and the 'tree of dule,' or 'hanging-tree,' is close at hand; so that my ancestors were able to adjust any little difficulties with their people very conveniently."

This was duly explained in French to the marquis, who, however, continued to be very dense

about the patriarchal system, and rose freely to Tom Wyedale's suggestion, that what he called the "affaire M'Hafiz" might probably have disastrous consequences for the aged vassal.

Presently the thunder of a cannon shook the castle. "That," said Lord Germistounne, "indicates that the bonfire on Dunerlacht is lighted, and that they are ready for us in the ballroom. Let us go."

They moved out into the court-yard, and halted there to admire the bonfire, which had blazed up into sudden maturity on the neighboring height, illuminating the woods and the fall with a splendid effect, and casting a weird light upon the castle walls. As they looked, there shot up, in rapid succession, and apparently from the heart of the fire, nineteen rockets of various colors. The sound of distant cheering followed.

"My clock has struck," said Esmè. "I never feel that my birthday has really come until the rockets have gone up."

"Why is that?" said Ribston.

"Oh, don't you know? Because there is a rocket for each year of my life. So that now all the great world of Glenelacht knows what a formidable age I have reached. Nineteen! It does feel formidable!"

"I had no conception that there was so much difference between our ages," simpered Mrs. Crook.

"Are you younger, or older, Mrs. Crook?" asked Tom Wyedale, with profound gravity.

"Oh, ever so much older! Five years, at least."

"So that Mrs. Crook," Lady Bugles whispered to Lord Ribston—"so that Mrs. Crook must have married at eleven, and become a widow at thirteen! Astonishing precocity!"

Whereat Lord Ribston laughed out with hearty frankness, after his kind.

"It is a pretty fancy," said Mrs. Ravenhall, "recording your age in this way, darling Esmè; but, by-and-by, you will shrink from such public admissions."

"Some of us here would do so to-night, I am very sure," says Mrs. Crook, with a withering glance at Lady Bugles, whose whisper she had pretty fairly interpreted by Lord Ribston's mirth.

"If we were honest enough to send up the right number of rockets, which surely *you* would never recommend, dear Mrs. Crook," replied her ladyship.

"I have not yet offered my congratulations," said Cosmo, who now joined the group. "I hope all the future years of your life will be as bright as the rockets which chronicle them when they are past."

Mrs. Ravenhall's sharp ears caught the words. "That is another pretty fancy!" she cried, with a ring of sarcasm in her voice, and closing in upon Esmè.

"Let us now go and see the people," said Lord Germistounne, who had just concluded a long mystifying statement to the marquis concerning Highland war-beacons and the fiery cross.

"Allons! marchons! partons! marchons!" sung the gay Frenchman.

The pipers struck up "Lord Dunerlacht's March," and a few paces brought them to the scene of the revel, where they were received with the same liturgical salute, under the fabledom of

Mr. M'Kenzie, "Ni sibli iolach tri uairean—and agus laclair—airson a mhoralachd," etc.

The barn was large and brilliantly lighted; it had an excellent wooden floor, and the walls were ornamented with such simple yet picturesque decorations as hills and glens afford. Each light, with its sconce, formed the centre of some floral device, in which heather and broom played prominent parts; and every here and there, Esmè's monogram was displayed, or the crowned heart of the Douglasses, woven in heather, white and purple, and enclosed in wreaths of bog-myrtle—the family badge of Dunerlacht. The company assembled included many who had not been present at the supper—"old-established people" from neighboring estates, and others, who had no feudal title to sit at meat in the baronial hall. In all, not less than two hundred men, women, and children were present, many of them in the Highland garb; so that, what with the brilliant light, and the colors on the walls, and the bright hues of the tartan, the *coup d'œil* of the room was most striking and effective.

At its upper end there was an *estrade* similar to that in the hall, upon which chairs were arranged, and over it, all the decorations in the room culminated in a tremendous work of art, wherein claymore, dirk, and spear formed a glory round the word "ESMÈ," which blazed colossal in variegated lights.

At the opposite end, three or four fiddlers seemed to cower apologetically, dwarfed, as it were, by the splendid swagger and general efflorescence of a good many brother minstrels of the pipe, who had congregated from near and far, to support Lord Germistoun's piper, old Hector Douglas, a magnificent patriarch, who wore countless medals, trophies won at every "gathering" in Scotland, and wore them with an air which would have done credit to the insignia of the Garter.

The castle party moved up to the *estrade*, Esmè stopping now and then to shake hands with, or say a kind word to, some special favorite; and when they were established in their places, eight pipers, under the leadership of the great Hector, swept round the room with that combination of *élan*, grace, and dignity distinctive of first-rate pipers in rapid march. They played the "Dunerlacht Gathering," and after three circuits of the room wheeled up with military precision, and, fronting the *estrade*, changed the measure to that of a strathspey. The *morceau* was Hector's own production; it had been inspired by Esmè's twelfth birthday, and was known to more than local fame as "Miss Douglas's Favorite." The music was most spirited, and nothing could be more admirable than its execution, for the performers were together like one man. The effect on the company was electric—literally electric; for, on three-fourths of the people, some kind of spasm was observable—some twitching of the hands, or movement of the feet, or vibration of the head, obedient to the irresistible rhythm of the pipes. Obviously, but for the awful presence of the magnates, the dance would have burst forth spontaneously all over the room, like the eruption of a volcano. Nor were they unaffected by it. The most benighted Sassenachs on the *estrade* owned its spell.

"It sounds like devil's music," said Tom Wydale; "but it would make an oyster dance. Hector must be own brother to the 'Pied Piper

of Hamelin.'" The marquis, who had stopped his ears at the first blast, presently uncorked them, and fell into a state of dangerous ecstasy.

"I must dance; I must dance," cried Mrs. Ravenhall.

"I positively must dance," echoed Lady Bugles, whose desire to ditto Mrs. Ravenhall occasionally ran away with her discretion.

"If every one is so impetuous," said Lord Germistoun, "we had better begin at once;" and he made a signal to the pipers, who stopped automatically, and, scooping the atmosphere away from their faces with their right hands by way of salute, faced to the right about, and retired down the hall.

"M'Kenzie!" cried his lordship. "Meester M'Ken-see," echoed a score of voices, and the factor came up and got his orders. "We are ready now. Form the sets in the usual way, and when all is prepared bring up Mrs. M'Haffie. You will dance opposite Miss Douglas, as usual." Then he explained to the circle that this dance also was hedged in with feudal restrictions, so that no one could participate in it, save himself, his daughter, and immediate dependents. "I am afraid, therefore, ladies, that you will have to repress your ardor for a little." Whereupon Mrs. Ravenhall assured him that she had been only joking, and had no thought of dancing, which naturally evoked from Lady Bugles the confession that her dancing project was also but the figment of a sportive fancy. The marquis, however, announced his firm resolution to assist in the second dance; "*À la guerre!*" he cried; "*comme à la guerre!*"

The factor seemed to have got the people into a marvellous state of drill. All eyes followed his movements, and as he turned from the *estrade* he gave a slight signal. Whereupon, without any hunting for partners or other confusion, twenty sets of four at once fell regularly into their places; and when this was done, the factor lifted up his voice and cried "Mrs. M'Haffie!" "Meestriiss M'Haffie!" echoed the room. "Maintenant," murmured the marquis, "*l'affaire M'Haffiz va se dénouer!*" But he was again cast back into the mists, when a little, elderly, respectable-looking woman made her appearance on the floor, and advanced timidly, with downcast eyes, toward the factor. Mr. M'Kenzie awaited her, looking very awful and uncompromising, as though it were now his duty to pinion Mrs. M'Haffie, before conducting her to "the drop;" and, indeed, the poor woman looked every inch the terror-stricken criminal, her nervous agitation being evidenced by the trembling of her lips, the twitching of her fingers, and the quivering of a perfect forest of wholly unreasonable spikes and pendicles of ribbon which garnished her head-gear. When Mr. M'Kenzie had, so to speak, taken Mrs. M'Haffie's body over, he conveyed it to the *estrade*, on the edge of which Lord Germistoun stood, looking still more awful and uncompromising than the factor.

"How do you do, Mrs. M'Haffie? how do you do?" said his lordship. "You will do me the favor to dance in the reel with me. Esmè, we are ready; M'Kenzie, take your place, and give the signal to the pipers."

M'Kenzie obeyed and clapped his hands; the sets sprung to "attention;" "Miss Esmè's Fa-

vorite" burst from the pipes with tremendous volume; the spell of restraint which hung over the party vanished as by magic; the delirium of the dance seized every one at once; and in an instant the room was alive with rhythmic motion. There were many fine performers on the floor, and every style had its representative, from the "orgiastic" dancer, who danced with all his body, and waved his arms, and shouted like a bacchanalian, to the disciple of a chaster school, who kept his body rigid, and with thoughtful eyes watched the movements of his own feet, as though each dainty step and twitch and twirl expressed some *nuance* of an artistic conception. But varied as the styles were, all the dancers were "together" as far as time went; and what with this, and the music of eight pipers, and the *thudding* and shouting of eighty performers, all "going like steam," and the swinging and fluttering of kilts and plaids, and the flashing eyes and animated faces, it would have been difficult to find a scene more infectiously gay and exhilarating. The ladies and gentlemen were all enthusiastic, and on the *estrade* there were cries of "Bravo!" and little view-halloos, and clappings of hands, responsive to the tumult of the dancers.

The marquis gradually worked himself into a state of terrific excitement, and was for beginning at once.

"Maintenant j'y suis!" he cried. "Madame de Bugells—Miladi Bugells! il faut commencer! Allons donc! allons! commençons!" And he would have haled her ladyship to the floor, had she not beaten him off with her fan. In front of the *estrade* Lord Germistoun's set had its station, and, notwithstanding that Esmé's fairy form adorned it, no dispassionate observer could have beheld it with gravity. Lord Germistoun, stiff as a ramrod, his left hand on his left haunch, his right perpendicularly aloft in the air, in the attitude of a fakir under a vow, shuffled his feet about, with no reference to the music, but like, as the Scotch saying is, "a hen on a het girle;" while, opposite to him, Mrs. M'Haffie, with her gown "kilted" so as to afford a liberal view of a pair of white woollen pasterns, and all the sensitive paraphernalia of her head in the wildest tumult, let loose her nervous excitement in a perfect cataract of nimble steps, astounding in a person of her years and demeanor. On the other side, Esmé's ethereal movements were in fine contrast to the performances of Mr. M'Kenzie, who danced in the most apoplectic manner, with both his arms held straight above his head, his eyes fixed and protruding, and his feet hammering away without variation of step, like the feet of a man going through the treadmill at "the double."

The strathspey turned into the reel proper, and, with the change, the spirit of the dance became, as usual, faster and more furious; and when his lordship shouted for the "Hooliehan," and the music changed to that most frenzied of all the measures, it seemed as though every one had suddenly acquired a new lease of fire and vigor. "Hooliehan! Hooliehan!" shouted the dancers. "Ouragan! Ouragan!" shrieked the marquis; and, no longer able to restrain his ardor, he dived into the very centre of Lord Germistoun's set, and, reckless of the feudal system, cut in between him and Mrs. M'Haffie, whose performances had excited his liveliest ad-

miration. "À moi, Madame M'Haffiz!" he cried; "à moi! Ouragan! Ouragan!" and proceeded to execute in front of the bewildered woman a frantic combination of the tarantella, the cancan, and other dances of ecstasy. There was a shout of laughter on the dais. Lord Germistoun halted, looking black as thunder. "M. le Marquis!" he cried, sternly. "Ha! ha! ha! Ouragan! Ouragan!" screamed the marquis; and, seizing Mrs. M'Haffie in the turning figure, swung her off her feet, and round and round and round, till her white woollen extremities colliding frankly with his lordship's legs, all but levelled that awful potentate with the floor. "M'Kenzie! M'Kenzie!" cried his lordship, with a gesture of rage and despair. Whereupon M'Kenzie shouted and waved to the pipers, and, with the sudden collapse of a tropical hurricane, the hurly-burly closed.

Lord Germistoun, ascending gloomily to the dais, was met with a torrent of congratulations. The dance had been either "soul-stirring" or "fetching" to the last degree; while his lordship's share in the transaction had, of course, been worthy of himself and of a great nation.

"But I think," said Ribston, who had no reverence, not even for Lord Germistoun, "the marquis has the highest score." The marquis could, at this moment, be seen in the distance, adding to his score by gallantly kissing Mrs. M'Haffie's hand in the way of adieu.

"The marquis," said his lordship, severely, "has certainly made himself conspicuous; but I should be sorry to hazard a repetition of his buffoonery, so I think it will be discreet if we now withdraw, and leave the people to themselves. M'Kenzie, we are going."

Way was at once made, the pipers formed, the march struck up, and the party moved out of the hall, under another salute of "three great strong cheers." In so far, however, as the repression of the marquis's buffoonery was concerned, the move was not a success, for neither he nor Tom Wyedale retired with "the quality," but continued with the proletariat till far into the night, winning golden opinions, especially the marquis, who, in performing "The Flowers of Edinburgh," twice achieved the feat of throwing his right leg clean over Mrs. M'Haffie's head, without disturbing a single pinnacle of the mysterious edifice which crowned it, and added about a foot or so to her legitimate stature.

"He's an awfu' man, yon!" was invariably the remark of Mrs. M'Haffie for several years after, when this ball was alluded to.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE abbreviation of the state visit to the people's ball left some part of the evening still to be disposed of; and when the party returned to the drawing-room, dancing was proposed. Mrs. Ravenhall, always obliging, and an indefatigable player of dance music, volunteered for the piano, and in a few minutes eight or nine couples were floating round the room in the dreamy rapture of the walse.

Cosmo, full of courage, would have entered the lists for Esmé's partnership, but Lord Ribston was too quick for him, and bore her off tri-

umphantly just as he approached. He fell back, therefore, upon Mrs. Crock, the only disengaged alternative being Lady Bugles, whose complex mechanism was not the sort of thing to involve one's self with unnecessarily.

"Only for a turn or two, of course," said Mrs. Crock; "it is the fun of an impromptu that there are no formal partnerships, but that every one keeps changing about continually." Her eye rested upon Esmè and Lord Ribston as she spoke; and Cosmo, with *his* eye on the same couple, said that he quite understood the theory, inwardly hoping to carry it into practice with the smallest possible delay. Then he took Mrs. Crock for a circuit of the room. She danced badly, and was a little cross, and inclined, as is the wont of bad dancers, to blame her partner, and soon intimated to Cosmo that she thought the moment had arrived for a change, which he promptly admitted, and left her gazing, with her eyes full of vain expectation, across the room to Lord Ribston. Cosmo had a turn or two with Miss Snapsley, and one with Miss Milkington, and one with another damsel; and still Lord Ribston monopolized Esmè, either dancing or sitting apart with her, in apparently confidential intercourse—still doing so, although the dancing had gone on so long that Mrs. Ravenhall had already had an interval of rest. Mrs. Crock and Cosmo were both afflicted; a common sorrow drew them together; or, to speak more correctly, Mrs. Crock having no one else to dance with, signalled to Cosmo, and he went to her.

"Pray, give me another turn," she said; "none of these wretches will look at me."

There was a straightforwardness about this which was irresistible, and Cosmo complied. When they stopped, his partner said, "I never saw anything like this before; they are all as faithful to each other as if they were under a vow to dance with no one else. It spoils all the fun."

Cosmo fully sympathized with her complaint, though, as a matter of fact, the system of change, except in so far as Esmè and Lord Ribston were concerned, was carried out very regularly. They had another turn. At its conclusion the situation was unaltered. Mrs. Crock glared at the offending couple, and then said, with considerable venom, "Miss Douglas really ought to know better. It is her part to set the example. No doubt her present temptation is great; still, a girl in her position ought to know better. It is against all etiquette monopolizing one man in this sort of way."

Cosmo felt that it was against all etiquette, monopolizing one *woman* in this sort of way, but practically they were agreed.

"We really ought to break up that *tête-à-tête*," said the widow. "Let us go and look at them, and make them ashamed of themselves."

Cosmo made no objection, and they went and looked. The manœuvre was, however, on the whole, abortive. The couple were not ashamed; and though Mrs. Crock took her partner twice past them, and delivered a broadside of meaning glances on each occasion, the only effect produced was that Ribston, on receiving the second volley, said, sleepily, "The widow looks as if she were on the war-path, don't she? She'll have her knife into some one soon, I expect."

Mrs. Crock then changed her tactics. "After all," she said, "I dare say Miss Douglas is not

to blame. I suppose she is too unsophisticated to know how to get away from Lord Ribston; and he is so lazy he will sit still for hours wherever he is planted. I do think it would be a kindness to her if you were to go and ask her to dance; besides, it will take the drag off the evening: it is dragging dismally now; don't you think so?"

Cosmo entirely agreed with her, and did as she suggested.

"Miss Douglas," he said, presenting himself in front of the couple, "will you have a turn with me now?"

"No, no, no!" cried Lord Ribston; "Miss Douglas is engaged to me—is dancing with me."

"Has been," said Cosmo, laughing; "and I am told that there *are* no engagements, and that every one dances promiscuously with every one, change and change about. I have twice received my *congé* on this principle; and if I have been taken back, I quite felt that it was as a *pis aller*. The fact is humbling; still I am entitled to use it in my favor now."

"No, no!" cried Ribston, rather hotly; "my good sir, one don't argue about such things. It's a matter of choice."

"Well, that is true, of course," said Cosmo; "and as I could hardly expect you to choose to give Miss Douglas up, I lay the matter before her. May I have one turn, Miss Douglas? Think," he added, laughing, "of Mrs. Crock's disgust if I have to inflict myself a third time upon her."

"I shall be delighted," said Esmè, rising. Whereupon Lord Ribston, unaccustomed to be thwarted, glared furiously at Cosmo, muttered something to the discredit of Mrs. Crock, and, without so much as a glance at that lady, retired to sulk over a book at the other end of the room.

And then Cosmo, dancing with Esmè, had his first true experience of the poetry of motion, seeming to glide through some rare medium of existence and movement, apart from this gross earth, suspended above it, in an atmosphere of melody.

* * * * *

After three circuits of the long room they stopped, and Cosmo, without speaking, looked into Esmè's eyes. There was no tumult or trouble in his gaze, only an expression of rapt serenity and love and happiness, which gave great beauty to his always noble but often too sombre face. Esmè did not turn away her eyes, in which there was a look of half-dreamy bewilderment and inquiry.

"Heavenly!" Still looking into her eyes, Cosmo uttered the word, so that, unconsciously perhaps to himself, it had the force of a double significance. Esmè made no reply for a moment; then she hurriedly withdrew her gaze, looked down, and said, with a manifest effort to return to the commonplace,

"Yes; I delight in the 'Doctrinen;' and does not Mrs. Ravenhall play charmingly?"

"Charmingly!" echoed Cosmo; and then there was an abrupt and lengthened pause in the conversation. Presently the music changed. Mrs. Ravenhall now played the "Geliebt und Verloren," and, at a certain passage of thrilling pathos, which all who know that exquisite valse

will at once identify, Esmè and Cosmo turned to each other, as if by a mutual instinct, and, without any words, again floated away together into the mystical realms of beatified reverie.

* * * * *

They came back to the cold world of fact. Again, but intensified, there were the same phenomena—looks of rapture meeting looks of shy bewilderment, meaningless phrases merging in silences full of meaning; all these things being the outward and visible signs either of tumultuous thoughts, vague and indefinable as yet, or of tumultuous thoughts fully comprehended, but as yet unutterable. Mrs. Ravenhall, playing with her back toward the dancers, little knew what spells she was helping to weave with her deft fingers, little recked what irony for herself there was in every note of the music which she made.

She had looked round once and seen Esmè and Cosmo dancing together; she had looked round a second time, and observed them standing in apparently harmless silence; but, on the third investigation, she beheld them at the moment of their arrival from dream-land, and detected the perfectly frank revelation, which to any interested on-looker could not have failed to be discernible in Cosmo's face. And then the plaint of the "Geliebt und Verloren" came to a sudden and rather spasmodic termination.

"Esmè!" cried Mrs. Ravenhall, "I am so sorry to stop, but my right wrist is dreadfully cramped. Would you get some kind person to take my place? or will you take it yourself, dear, for a little? So sorry!"

Whereupon Esmè ran to the piano with an alacrity which rather pained Cosmo, and began to play with an energy that had something feverish in it. And now, if Cosmo had been discreet, he would probably have paid Mrs. Ravenhall the cheap compliment of asking her to dance; or similarly mollified Mrs. Crock, who, like a lioness bereft of her cub, was furious with everybody and everything; or even harnessed himself to the risky complexities of Lady Bugles; or, in fact, done anything rather than what he did—which was to go and stand at the piano and look at the fair performer, not wisely, but too well. For Mrs. Ravenhall, sitting with the two other malcontents, saw it all, and pointed it out to them, and was ferociously merry at the expense of "The Foundling," and said epigrammatic things about him, which were too good not to be repeated; and, in short, being now thoroughly convinced that Cosmo meant mischief, and might be mischievous, began seriously to mobilize her forces of reprisal.

There was a pause in the music, and a conversation took place at the piano which looked, in the distance, far more serious than it sounded—and another pause, similarly occupied; and at last Mrs. Ravenhall could stand it no longer.

"It is dreadfully late, I am sure," she exclaimed; "and it is quite evident that *that* man has no intention of going." So saying, she rose and went over to Lord Germistoun—*who* had just sustained a series of crushing defeats at "Gobang" from Dr. Pentacle, his pupil in the game, and was rather cross in consequence—and said that it was dreadfully late, and that she, being much fatigued, would now say good-night, and slip away, without a word to the others, so as not to disturb the revels. Lord Germistoun

detested (as she knew) late hours, and he at once arose and said it was time for them all to be in bed.

"But," objected Mrs. Ravenhall, "Mr. Glencairn has not gone yet; and indeed he looks as if he had *very* little inclination to go."

"I suppose," said Lord Germistoun, "he can take a hint. Esmè! Esmè! I think, my dear, that will be enough of music. Every one is tired, and it is time for so many fair ladies with bright complexions to be in bed."

Upon this there was a general move; and Cosmo, at once making his adieux to Esmè, said hurriedly, and in a low voice,

"I have to thank you for the happiest evening of my life. You will not forget the song?"

"No. I will copy it for you to-morrow."

"And when may I hope to get it?"

"The next time you come here."

"I am afraid I am dreadfully impatient. When may I come?"

"Whenever you please, Mr. Glencairn, of course. The song will be copied to-morrow morning."

"Good-night; and I wish," he murmured, "I had words to thank you with." Then he turned away, concentrating, in one long look, all his gratitude and love and worship. The rest of his adieux were quickly made to a cold or hostile company, and he left the room accompanied by Lord Germistoun, who went, less with the air of a host performing a hospitable courtesy than of a man uncertain of the honesty of his departing guest.

"I thought," said Mrs. Ravenhall, rubbing her hands and beaming on the company, as if in congratulation on their relief from so terrible an incubus—"I thought that *dreadful* man was never going!"

"I confess I feared the stupid creature was going to be a fixture," echoed Lady Bugles.

"And neither a useful nor an ornamental one," added Mrs. Crock; "he talks like a stick, and dances like a poker."

"A fellow of that sort is not meant to dance," said Lord Ribston; "and he certainly doesn't seem to know when he's in the way."

This sudden attack upon one absent—upon one so quiet and inoffensive to others, so gentle and chivalrous in manner (she put it thus) to herself, so superior to these small people—she felt at the moment, that they were very, very small—who were sneering at him, roused Esmè's generous indignation so that her color rose, and there was a flash of dangerous light in her eyes. Mrs. Ravenhall continued the attack. "I would have saved you from him if I could, dear Esmè, but I really could not offer to take the piano again, because of my stupid wrist. I felt for you, however, I assure you; I did, indeed—deeply; so did Lady Bugles."

"Deeply, deeply," moaned Lady Bugles. Whereupon all the conventionals sustained a shock to their moral and nervous systems, for Esmè answered, with much spirit,

"I am afraid you have been sadly wasting your compassion, Mrs. Ravenhall. I was in no sort of distress, I assure you. Mr. Glencairn is by far the best dancer I ever danced with in my life, to begin with; and I certainly think him the last person I ever met with who could be called stupid. Of course that may be because

I am stupid myself. Still I think so; so I have no right to your compassion."

Mrs. Ravenhall's countenance changed. Here she found herself, for the first time, confronted with those characteristics in Esmè of which, as she had told Tom in the early days of their association, she feared that she beheld the symptoms—her straightforwardness and self-reliance and independence of conventional considerations, when these interfered with what she thought was just and generous and true. Mrs. Ravenhall's sense of the proprieties was, of course, terribly lacerated by what she inwardly called "this exhibition;" but she was far more affected to find that she had made a grave tactical blunder.

"Darling Esmè!" she replied, in cooing tones of conciliation, "I *really* thought you looked dismally bored; but now that I know I was mistaken, I am penitent for having, under a misapprehension, depreciated your *new protégé*." This little stab was also dealt with in the same thorough style.

"Thanks, Mrs. Ravenhall—I am sure you are; for I am sure you know me well enough to know that I do not like to hear absent friends run down—any more than you would yourself."

And now, Lord Germistoun returning, the party broke up, and the ladies went to bed.

But Mrs. Ravenhall entered Esmè's room with her, and tried to retrieve the error in her tactics by another little demonstration against Cosmo.

"You are not vexed with me, my love?" she said, sweetly.

"No, dear Mrs. Ravenhall; how can you think so? If I had any cause to be so, you have made the *amende*."

Then they embraced.

"You see, darling," resumed Mrs. Ravenhall, "I naturally thought you must be bored with him."

"Why '*naturally*,' Mrs. Ravenhall?"

"Well, *unnaturally*, dear," laughed Mrs. Ravenhall, with another kiss. "And perhaps—though, of course, *here* it does not matter in the least, not in the very least—I was just a little annoyed to see you so conspicuous with so hopeless an ineligible—so hopeless that I *need not*, of course, have worried myself if I had only reflected; but if I spoke sharply of him, it was only out of my love for you. I am a silly old goose; but it's your own fault for being so lovable. Now, darling, good-night."

"But what do you mean by 'conspicuous,' Mrs. Ravenhall? I don't understand how one is to avoid being so, if it is 'conspicuous' to take two or three turns of a valse with one gentleman in the drawing-room of one's own home. At all events, I can't see that, if that sort of thing does make one conspicuous, it can do any harm. I am sure I did the same thing with Mr. Wydale the other night, and to-night with Lord Ribston. Was I conspicuous with them, too? How often ought one to change partners so as to avoid this dreadful calamity?"

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks,"

thought Mrs. Ravenhall; but she had shot her bolt about Cosmo's ineligibility, which was all she intended, so she cried, gayly, "You shall dance for a hundred or a thousand turns, darling, with one man and the same man if you

please, and I shall always vow that you are right. I had no idea that you could take things *au sérieux* like this, you silly child. Now I must go to bed;" and, with another silencing embrace, she escaped in flight from further discussion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IF Esmè had been brought up with the advantages which so many girls conventionally educated enjoy—that is to say, of being surrounded by female mentors forever (and often prematurely) inculcating the precepts of that diplomacy which concerns itself about the relations between the sexes, forever (and often prematurely) harping upon matrimony in all the ramifications of that important subject—Mrs. Ravenhall would not, perhaps, have had so much cause to complain of Esmè's loveliness, and Esmè herself would have been saved from many of the confusions in which she now found herself involved. For, in addition to the fine arts of "drawing on," "discouraging," "holding in suspense," and otherwise "playing" the suitor, in addition to a correct appreciation of the matrimonial tables of weights and measures, she would have had, codified, so to speak, and at her fingers' ends, the various symptoms, in all their *nuances*, which bespeak the presence of the tender passion. But Lord Germistoun was not a likely source from whence to derive lore of this sort, nor yet was the admirable lady who had brought her up from her earliest years, and who, in educating her young charge, had acted on the old-world principle that it was her duty to develop a rational being rather than to construct a marrying automaton. And thus it befell that the events of to-day and yesterday, and a world of new emotions and problems arising from them, suddenly confronting this inexperienced young heart, overwhelmed it with a bewilderment inconceivable, perhaps, and certainly laughable, to girls her juniors in age, but moulded, which Esmè certainly was not, "to the fashion of these times."

Cosmo had interested her from the very first; so much will be remembered. There was something unusual about him and his ways of life and thought, and even in his manner, which touched her imagination and her sense of the romantic. Then the strange revelation of his troubles had, in the very confession of his weakness, not only disclosed the nobleness of his aspirations, but thrown a bridge of sympathy over the distance which separated her from him, intellectually, as she believed. Nor could it fail to touch her that this man, whose somewhat proud reserve kept him apart from others, had unbent for *her*; that he had given to her the secret of his moral conflicts, and thereby interpreted to her much in him that was enigmatical, perhaps, to every one else. She had felt much interest in him during the brief period of their first acquaintanceship; she had constantly remembered him with interest during their separation, and perhaps it was not merely on Cosmo's part that the feeling of a *rapport* existing between them had grown in the interval. She was very happy to meet him again; but since they had met—in these two short days—what

had happened to make him no longer the object of a tranquil, if of a warm, interest? This perplexed her. She did not consciously put the question to herself, but the perplexity which it represented was there. What had happened? What *had* happened was, that Cosmo had thrown into evidence before her the full volume of his unspoken passion; that, without restraint, he had expressed it in every look and implied it in every tone, and even involuntarily conveyed its declaration through the mysterious medium of magnetic sympathy. What *had* happened and what *was* happening was naturally producing a change in the character of the interest which she felt for Cosmo Glencairn. But she was perplexed, knowing not the signs and symbols of these strange matters. She tried to formulate her impressions and her feelings. "He likes me very much, and I am glad that he likes me. I am sure that he likes me, because he looks as if he were very happy to be with me. He said that my song had been always ringing in his ears, and that he had thought of me very often. He thanked me for the happiest evening of his life. But why should he like me? and why should he have been so happy? I only sung him that trifling little song. Could that make him happy? But I am sure that he likes me, and I am very happy that he likes me. And I am sure that I like him; and I am glad that I said he was my friend—because he *is* my friend—and defended him against all these ill-natured people. What right had they to speak of him so? They don't know what he is. If they only knew what I know of him, they could not speak so. I wonder why he likes me more than he did at Como?—if he *does* like me more, and I think he does. Yet it is only two days! And I wonder why I seem to know him so much better, and to like him more, I think—I *do* think—much more—and that is so strange, because it is only two days! And I wonder if he likes many other people *much*! And—but surely I have thought enough about him."

"I wonder, and I wonder, and I wonder!"—to this refrain the innocent young heart explored a labyrinth without a clue; and through all her wonderings the eyes of Cosmo haunted her bewilderingly, and his sweet, grave smile seemed to lead her on; and, though the eyes were not the look of a *friend*, and though that sweet smile was not *friendship's* smile, yet was the ever-recurring conclusion of her guileless reverie only this: "I am sure that he likes me very much, and I am sure that I like him. And I wonder why it seems so strange to-night!" It will be seen that she was as ignorant of the philosophy of love as she was unlettered in the science of matrimony; and that "ineligibles," "conspicuousness," and so forth, were terms of a language which had little meaning for her ear.

Was Cosmo acting heroically? Was he true to himself—to his principles—to his resolution? Let us remember that he had decided that the only condition on which any sort of hope of winning Esmè was admissible—even to himself—was the achievement of personal distinction so complete as to obliterate the stigma on his birth, which seemed at present to place a barrier between her and him. How, then, could he reconcile with this his presence here? or, if that were explained away, how could he reconcile

with it his demeanor toward her, whom his every look and tone wooed with the fervor of a master-passion? It must be admitted that he could not reconcile these things. It must be further owned that he did not attempt to reconcile them. The casuistry of love had gradually levelled his pedestal, till now (heroic no more, but altogether human) he moved only in obedience to the dictates of the divine delirium, and not to those of reason. The nearest approach to a compromise with his own resolve which he made was this—and he soon saw and was ashamed of its selfishness—that if, by any means short of an *éclaircissement*, he could assure himself of Esmè's love, then he would be satisfied; then he would go silently away, and, strong in this inspiring certainty, achieve that renown whose alchemy, transmuting baseness to nobility, should entitle him to approach her worthily. But, when this was condemned, he sought no substitute; and though he was now following his father's advice, he did so unconsciously, abandoning himself upon no principle whatever on the swift-rushing current of delight, concentrated on the present, reckless of the future, fearless of all the catastrophes to which he might be gliding.

Alas! there is no defense for him, although Esmè's surpassing charms might perhaps be admitted as extenuating circumstances of special force; no defense, save that contained in the trite old aphorism (old, probably, as love itself) which levels the hero with the hind, and confounds the simple with the sage—"Love conquers all."

CHAPTER XXIX.

OLD Davidson would have required the patience of Job to stand the various disappointments to which Cosmo subjected him. The morning after the ball at Dunerlacht was as fine as its two predecessors, and at last, the keeper thought, there would be an end of "nonsense" and half-measures. He had quite decided in his own mind that this morning he would take his master over one of the wilder and more distant beats, which would be less easily and productively shot after "the weather broke"—that contingency which hangs like a nightmare over Scotch keepers. Deep, then, was his disgust when, in reply to a suggestive message which he sent up to Cosmo's bedroom, and by which he craved to know "whether the captain would take Craig-Rona that day, or content himself with the Kaims," he was informed that the captain, for his content, required neither the one nor the other, nor *any* other beat, not being minded to go out at all that day. Davidson turned his face heavenward, and raised both his arms high in the air, as if calling Heaven to witness that he washed his hands of this squanderer of its bounty. "Maist notorious!" were his only words, as he went sadly away.

The idea of shooting had never crossed Cosmo's mind, because he assured himself that it was absolutely necessary that he should call at Dunerlacht that day, as the merest matter of etiquette; but, independently of that, the song was to be ready that morning, and if he did not reclaim it at the earliest opportunity, would not

his indifference be justly regarded as brutal? There was but one obvious answer to this; and, with difficulty restraining his impatience till something like the canonical hours of visitation had arrived, he went. He went on foot, and he had a delightful walk, albeit moving at speed; for, buoyed up with blessed anticipations, he trod upon air, and beheld the outer world by a beautifying inner light which no cloud veiled.

The door is reached; the bell is rung; there appears to be a delay of about six calendar months; and at last a leisurely footman, who has obviously been disturbed at a meal, and is still in the act of mastication, appears. The insensate being seems to be a little aggrieved, and almost to take a malicious pleasure in delivering his overwhelming announcement. Not at home! No one: not even Lord Germistoun; not even Mrs. Ravenhall, for whom actually, in his desperation, Cosmo asks! Most of the gentlemen have gone shooting; the rest, with *all* the ladies, have gone for a picnic.

"A picnic?—what! another picnic?" cried Cosmo, in a tone of such frank disapprobation that it brought the rudiments of a grin to the footman's face; and after trying that official's patience by remaining for some time silent and motionless, he woke up, and, saying that he would not leave cards, but return to-morrow, went away, moving with a crushed and bewildered air, in strange contrast to the energy and eagerness of his arrival. Slowly and purposeless, he loitered down the glen. The progress of his life was virtually arrested for twenty-four hours. The only event worthy of the name, or which could advance his history by ever so short a stage, was postponed for that time, and the interval—that long and weary interval—must be passed in a feverish middle state, between dream-life and waking consciousness, monotonous, but without repose—monotonous from the domination of one idea, but of an idea whose fierce activity reigned in perpetual tumult. Slowly he went down the glen, held by love's attraction within sight of Esmè's home; lingering in the scene upon which her beautiful eyes constantly rested; making oracles of the hills and woods which had mingled with her thoughts; seeking association with her in every leaf and flower, and indulging in all the wild and picturesque fantasies of a poet-lover's pantheism.

Hours passed, and still he lingered—now down by the river, now up among the woods. At last, descending to the high-road, where it was in the middle of an ascent, he heard the distant sound of wheels, and, turning, beheld a large carriage slowly ascending toward him. It was a brake, full of people, and blossoming with the bright hues of ladies' hats and parasols. There could be no doubt that this was the Dumerlacht party, nor any that they would be up with him in about three minutes—a limited allowance of time wherein to recover one's senses, after a descent from the visionary world; and flight to the thickets was his first impulse.

But *she* must be of the company, so that flight was impossible; and, feeling that it would not do to be found mooning and stationary on the high-road, he compromised the matter by turning back in the direction of the castle.

They gained on him; the sound of many voices grew more and more distinct; the breath-

ing of the horses was audible above the beating of his heart; he drew aside; they were abreast; he looked round. And first he saw Lord Ribston, who took no notice of him; and then Mrs. Ravenhall, who sweetly and silently bowed to him; and then—a lowered parasol; and then Lord Germistoun, who rolled out his usual formula, "How do you do, sir?—how do you do?" and this attracted the attention of all, and compelled the elevation of the parasol and the disclosure of Esmè's beautiful face, made all the more beautiful by a vivid blush, which it seems almost brutal to chronicle, but which, as a matter of fact, had been taking place for some little time behind the parasol, indeed from the moment when her eyes (before all other eyes) had caught sight of Cosmo. He, keeping pace with the carriage, saluted the party comprehensively; and then, crossing to Esmè's side, made special inquiries as to her condition after the ball, also as to that of "the eternal Mrs. Ravenhall," who sat beside her—all in orthodox form, astonishing in a man whose thoughts were the merest chaos.

"I called at the castle this forenoon," he said, after walking along for a little in silence; "but as I hope to do so again to-morrow, I did not leave my card."

"We shall be at home to-morrow, I think," said Esmè, "though most of the gentlemen will be, of course, on the hill."

"You cannot be such a devotee to sport as your friend Tom, Mr. Glencairn. Two days away from the hill in succession! that sounds very lukewarm—quite *surprisingly* so!" said Mrs. Ravenhall.

"Oh, I have had so much of it in my time, I am no longer a ravenous sportsman. But my keeper quite agrees with you, Mrs. Ravenhall; he thinks me a monster of insensibility. By-the-bye, would you kindly say to Tom that if he cares to go, and will go, and shoot at Finmore to-morrow, I shall be very much obliged to him? If some one doesn't shoot there, I don't know what will happen to old Davidson: I believe he will shoot *himself*. But if Tom can go, he will be appeased. Tom is a great hero of his."

"It can't be a stratagem," thought Mrs. Ravenhall; "for that wretch" (Tom had become "that wretch" since "the Twelfth") "could make no one take the trouble to scheme against him." Then she said aloud, "I will give him your message," speaking glumly, feeling how hard it was that this man should come and take so naturally to the part which all her skill and tactics could not get Tom to play with the slightest life or continuity.

"I suppose," she continued, "Tom is to go to your lodge? I suppose you will shoot the first part of the day with him?"

"Unfortunately," said Cosmo, "I expect that a friend will probably arrive from town to-morrow forenoon, and I must be at home to receive him. If he should arrive, Miss Douglas, may I bring him over with me to the castle? He has not been in Scotland before, and I should like particularly to show him so very fine a specimen of the old Scotch architecture. He will be greatly interested in it."

"Pray bring him," said Esmè; "and won't you come to luncheon?"

"Thanks! I shall be delighted, if he arrives in time."

"And then," she said, "he can see all our lions outside and in. Papa," she continued, turning to her father, who always contrived to abstract himself aggressively, by alien conversation or otherwise, from any sort of intercourse with Cosmo—"papa, Mr. Glencairn is perhaps going to bring a friend who is much interested in architecture" (Phil Denwick!) "to see the castle to-morrow, and perhaps they will be able to come to lunch. Shall you be at home?"

"You know, my dear, it is impossible for me, short of a definite engagement, to say that I shall certainly be at luncheon on any given day; but if Mr. Glencairn does us the favor to visit the castle with his friend, there will be luncheon for him, whether I am at home or not."

And with this somewhat ungracious ratification, delivered without a look at Cosmo, the summit of the ascent was reached, the horses broke into a trot, and Cosmo was again alone with the music of her "good-bye" ringing in his ears, and the ineffable witchery of her smile thrilling in every fibre of his heart.

"So much for the FOUNDLING!" said Mrs. Crock; whereat there was boisterous merriment all over the party.

"Who?" said Lord Germistounne.

"The Foundling," repeated Mrs. Crock, amidst renewed mirth.

"And may I ask who the Foundling is?" said his lordship.

"That man we have just left behind. He still looks a little lost, doesn't he?"

"As if he would be the better of being found over again? Eh? ha! ha! ha!" cried Lord Ribston.

"But why do you call him 'the Foundling'?" asked Lord Germistounne.

"I? Oh, I don't know; because he is one, I suppose. Didn't some one say so?" said Mrs. Crock.

"Mrs. Ravenhall knew the people who found him, I believe," said Lady Bugles.

"My dear Lady Bugles, how *can* you say so!" said Mrs. Ravenhall, aghast at being involved so far beyond what her diplomacy contemplated.

"In the cart, you know," suggested Lady Bugles; but this hazy *aide-mémoire* threw a fresh mist over the subject; for Lord Germistounne cried out, impatiently,

"Yes, yes; but *who* found him in the cart? That's what I want to know."

"Mrs. Ravenhall—" began Lady Bugles; and the loud laughter of the whole party stopped the inquiry for a time.

"Indeed I didn't," laughed Mrs. Ravenhall; "but I said—and it just shows how foolish one is to say things—that I *fancied* I had heard that there *was* a sort of suspicion that there *was* some little mystery about Mr. Glencairn's birth. If I used the word 'foundling,' it could, of course, have only been as a joke, for I know nothing about it."

"Hum!" said Lord Germistounne, delighted to scent something to Cosmo's disadvantage; "this is mysterious. You don't know what his origin is?"

"No," said Mrs. Ravenhall; "I cannot say that I do."

"And your brother does not know?"

"I should suppose not."

"Oh, then, he may be a foundling, after all.

There is no smoke without fire. Now, Mrs. Ravenhall, does it not occur to you that there is a slight recklessness in all this on your brother's part—I think I may say, an unpardonable recklessness—in introducing, right and left, a man he knows nothing of? Wyedale should not have done this. I must speak to him about it. I am distinctly disappointed in Wyedale."

"But, dear Lord Germistounne," said Mrs. Ravenhall, beginning to get alarmed, "*did* Tom introduce him to you?"

"I—I apprehend so. Well, let me recollect; perhaps not precisely, but practically, your brother was his voucher. Now, Wyedale takes upon himself a heavy responsibility. Wyedale doesn't know what he may be answering for. At this rate Wyedale may find himself standing sponsor for crime even—what?"

But now the matter was getting much too serious, and Mrs. Ravenhall was obliged absolutely to dispel the mist, as far as in her lay, not only for Tom's sake, but for her own, as the launcher of the unfortunate epithet. "My dear Lord Germistounne," she said, "you are altogether mistaken. Tom and Mr. Glencairn have been friends since their childhood—at school, at college, and in society. Mr. Glencairn is perfectly well known in society. He has been in the army; he is received everywhere. His uncle, Colonel Wildgrave, was extremely well known in London. This nephew of his inherited his fortune and his social position. You are really taking the matter far, far too much *au grand sérieux*; and all because I can't say that I know Mr. Glencairn's origin; or, rather, because of this comical mistake of Lady Bugles."

There was really nothing to be said after this; but Lord Germistounne had taken kindly to the "foundling" theory, and parted with it unwillingly. Besides which, when he had boiled up to the pitch of the didactic and the awful, he could not be expected to boil down again all in a moment. He remarked, therefore, that that was, no doubt, all very satisfactory and very true, so far; but, for his part, he thought Wyedale was bound to "probe the mystery"—for he adhered tenaciously to the existence of a mystery. Then, apropos, he related an anecdote of a ticket-of-leave man, who had been recently going about in London society as a foreign nobleman. "So," he concluded (and thus perversely suggesting a possible connection between Cosmo and the ticket-of-leave class), "we can never be too careful. I shall certainly speak to Wyedale."

This he accordingly did, in the drawing-room, before dinner.

"I wish, Wyedale, to ask you something."

"Not a conundrum, my lord, I hope," said Tom, gayly.

"Not a conundrum," said his lordship, in a tone which discouraged levity, "though it concerns what appears to be somewhat enigmatical. There was a good deal of discussion to-day, in the carriage, about your friend Mr. Glencairn, and my curiosity is piqued about him. Ahem! Lady Bugles and Mrs. Crock appeared to have the impression that he was—ahem!—a foundling."

Here Tom burst into an extravagant fit of laughter, which could not be quenched for some time, and during which Lord Germistounne began to stiffen palpably about the neck, and to look dangerously aquiline.

"This seems to amuse you," he said, grimly. "Oh yes, indeed it does; and I beg your pardon," gasped Tom, with the tears running down his cheeks. "I must tell Cosmo. It is the awful dignity of his face, when he hears his origin, that I am thinking of, and that kills me. A foundling! ha! ha! ha! Capital! Lady Bugles, you deserve a medal."

"But—" Lady Bugles began, in remonstrance.

"The whole thing, Tom," said Mrs. Ravenhall, eagerly, "was simply a misunderstanding arising from my being unable to say exactly what Mr. Glencairn's origin is; the word 'foundling' was simply a little joke of Lady Bugles's—or—some one else's—it doesn't matter who."

Lady Bugles was astounded to find herself being shoved deeper and deeper into the "foundling" imbroglio; but she never could get a chance of righting herself.

"If you will allow me to say, Wyedale," said his lordship, with his ears well back, in resentment at having the word taken out of his mouth—"if you will allow me to say—what I would have said some time ago, if I had been permitted—there was no serious question as to his being a—ahem!—a foundling. That, I believe, was admitted to be a pleasantry which Lady Bugles allowed herself. But, leaving that aside, I venture to say, and I venture to repeat, that there is a certain recklessness in answering socially for a man about whom there is a mystery. You understand me?"

"Certainly; but where is the mystery?"

"About this friend of yours."

"There is no mystery about him."

"No!"

"None whatever. I have known him all my life."

"But his family?"

"Well, I knew his uncle—capital fellow his uncle! tipped Cosmo's friends with a catholic hand; and his aunt too—a capital specimen of the aunt—and—"

"Yes, yes, yes, Wyedale; but had your friend a father of his own? And if so, who was he?"

"You asked me that, I remember, once before, Lord Germistounne; and I can only say, what I said before, that he not only had, but has, a father, though I don't happen to know him. After all, there's nothing mysterious in that. I don't know everybody's father. Very glad I don't. Fathers, as a rule, are a mistake. Present company always honorably excepted."

"Then," said Lord Germistounne, "I suppose we must give him the benefit of the doubt. We must conclude that Lady Bugles's jest had no serious foundation."

"There's no doubt about Cosmo Glencairn," cried Tom, heartily; "and no mystery, except that he is a mysteriously good fellow to be going about loose nowadays; and Lady Bugles must have dreamed—"

"But," cried Lady Bugles, "I never—"

Here, however, dinner was announced, and the conversation was broken off, Lord Germistounne perversely nourishing a sort of hazy half-belief that there was something amiss about Cosmo's antecedents, and that Lady Bugles could unfold a tale, if she only chose to do so. So that this one little spiteful word of Mrs. Ravenhall's, let slip in a moment of undiplomatic

vexation, was near producing a dangerous commotion without doing anything to further her views—indeed, probably much the reverse. For the abuse of the absent—even of the absent unknown—is always distasteful to a generous nature; and Esmè was beginning to think that there was a general disposition to attack and decry Mr. Glencairn, whom she knew and—respected; and what the effect of this upon her feelings toward Cosmo might be it is unnecessary to discuss. It may be mentioned, however, that the same evening, when Tom Wyedale was making one of his light cynical speeches as to the general inexpediency and hollowness of human friendship, she said to him with great warmth, "No, Mr. Wyedale, I am sure you don't think so, because *you* don't turn your back upon absent friends; and I can easily forgive your theories when your practice is—is what I admire." Tom opened his eyes: he had forgotten all about the Cosmo episode, and merely said, "I'm so glad you're glad I'm admirable;" but, after all, he was entitled to some credit for disappointing Lord Germistounne's palpable prejudice, when we recollect that the great bulk of the "mixed shooting" was still unexhausted, and that the "Three Kimmers" were a certainty for him, in any case.

CHAPTER XXX.

On his return home Cosmo found a telegram from Phil Denwick, announcing that he would leave town that night and be at Finmore on the following forenoon; and on the following forenoon Phil made his appearance accordingly. He was a very different-looking individual from the shabby loungeer whom his friend had so recently found on the brink of the abyss, and rescued with so much promptitude; and as Cosmo recognized that the true cheery ring had come back to his voice, and saw the old light sparkling again in his merry eyes, he felt a thrill of pure unselfish happiness, which, as he said to himself, was the best return his money had brought him for many a long day.

"Here you are, old Phil!" he cried, heartily, as his friend drove up. "Awfully good of you to come!"

"Here I am, Cosmo, with commercial promptitude and despatch—also as per invoice, wired. I didn't lose a single train, you see."

"No, that was right. The grouse want shooting, and the sooner they get it, the better. Come in. Have you breakfasted, and can you hold on till luncheon?"

"Breakfasted! yes—and I can hold on till midnight. I say, what a glorious country! what air! what scenery!"

"Yes, and I am glad you have it so fine for your first experience."

"Fine! it's heavenly." Then he went on, with his old boyish eagerness, "And I've already seen grouse! grouse upon the wing! A covey of fourteen actually raced with the train—kept up with it too. It was a thrilling spectacle for a Cockney sportsman. It quite set me trembling all over. By-the-by, what queer fellows your Scotch second-class passengers seem to be! I playfully confided my agitation about the grouse

to a fellow-traveller. He looked me all over very carefully for about two minutes, and then said, judicially, 'A rack'n ye'll be easy fley't!' which, whatever he may have meant, seemed inconsequent, and to a foreign ear has a truculent sound, has it not?"

"What did you say to him?" asked Cosmo, laughing.

"Say to him? Oh! I said, that for the matter of that, I fancied I was pretty well able to take care of my skin—which seemed to puzzle him, for he shut up. But then another fellow stood in, and shouted at me what might have been a war-cry, and which sounded like 'Whaur-i-ye-fae,' and kept shouting it at me over and over again, and louder each time, till at last it was a regular bellow, 'WHAUR-I-YE-FAE?' I told him that he might howl away till he was blue in the face, but that if he expected to get a rise out of me he was mistaken; and that choked him off too, but he seemed pretty savage. They appear to be a rum lot. I say, old boy, you're looking awfully thin. What have you been about? Taking it out of yourself on the hill?"

"No, not too much; haven't had time yet. But tell me all about yourself, Phil."

Then, as they walked about the garden, Phil gave his friend an account of his educational progress, and made him laugh with several funny stories about Mr. Hopper in his capacity of commercial mentor, and the compliments which Mr. Hopper paid his disciple, and the "prodigious trading instinct" which he had discovered him to possess; and rattled away in his exuberant vein till he had exhausted the topic, and then said,

"Now, Cosmo, I'm not a bit tired. Is there any just cause why we should not go out and have a shoot this afternoon? Splendid day! pity to waste it!"

Whereupon Cosmo blushed and explained that they were engaged to lunch at Dunerlacht Castle, and, looking at his watch, said that they must start in twenty minutes; so that if Phil wished to freshen himself up a little after his journey, now was the time. Then Phil's face fell as he begged off, swearing that he abhorred castles, and abominated society, and would rather stay behind, and enter himself with the grouse. He was overruled, however, and of course carried off.

"You are supposed," said Cosmo, as they drove along, "to be going expressly to lionize the castle, and to be deeply interested in architecture; so mind you be interested."

"All right," said Phil. "Who does the place belong to?"

"Lord Germistounne."

"Never heard of him."

"You'd better not let him know that. He is rather a dangerous old gentleman. In fact, generally speaking, you had better be very careful."

"Oh, hang it, Cosmo! you speak as if I were going into the witness-box. You'd better let me down, and I'll go back to the grouse. Remember, I don't know the ways of the country."

"Don't be alarmed, Phil. All you've got to do is to be very amiable—which comes natural to you."

"I see; employ the soothing system; agree with everything he says."

"That," said Cosmo, laughing, "will certainly be the safest plan."

"All right; even if he says 'whaur-i-ye-fae,' I shall say that that exactly represents my view of the matter, and that the sentiment does him credit. I would rather have tackled the grouse, though."

"You shall tackle them to-morrow, to your heart's content."

They arrived rather late, and luncheon was already in progress. The party was not in strong force. Some departures had taken place, and most of the gentlemen were on the hill. Lord Germistounne was, however, present, and his capricious temper appeared to be in unusually good order. Things looked promising. Cosmo found a seat near Esmé, and Phil was installed beside her father.

Phil was one of those lucky fellows who prepossess most people they come across, even the most dissimilar people. He had that frank simplicity of manner and expression, which is the charm of children, and irresistible in the grown-up, when, as in Phil's case, combined with intelligence and geniality. At present he showed to great advantage, for he was brimming over with the happiness of reaction, and as fresh and eager as a school-boy out for his holiday. Even Lord Germistounne, notwithstanding the auspices under which Phil was his guest, soon unbent, and became very civil and even cordial; and it was fortunate that Phil knew nothing of the relations between his introducer and his host, so that he was quite unconstrained, and had only a humorous recollection that it was his duty to coincide with his lordship's opinions upon things in general.

"Your first visit to Scotland, Mr. Fenwick, I believe?" said Lord Germistounne, after he had quite thawed down.

"I am ashamed to say that it is," said Phil, "though I won't say that I am sorry, for I am enjoying all the pleasures of a first experience, and they are very great. This is a glorious country!"

"I think that we may consider it a glorious country."

"I would give anything to have a property here."

"Ah, that is a different question: that is a very prevalent feeling. Our land is very much sought after in the market—offensively so."

"Indeed!"

"Hucksters from Manchester are always on the watch—the harpies! They bid anything for land in this quarter."

"Ah! I'm not surprised at that."

"They swoop on us like vultures, with their ill-gotten gains."

"And purchase the land?"

"And mob out people who are entitled to be landholders. The whole of the neighboring parish of Auchinfeoch has recently been acquired by a huckster."

"Really! From Manchester?" asked Phil, sympathetically.

"From Manchester; of the name of Runnicles—which might account for almost anything. I flatter myself Mr. Runnicles knows very distinctly the view I take of his conduct."

"You resented the purchase as—as an intrusion?"

"I resented it, sir, as a scandalous abomination. How would you like to have German Jews walking about in kilts in your district?"

"It would be highly unpleasant, of course," said Phil, stifling his laughter with great difficulty.

"Unpleasant! It's enough to demoralize the whole district. You are comparatively exempt from such pests in the South. I presume, however, you are what in England is called from 'the North?' There is no mistaking your name; it has the true Border ring."

"Still, Lord Germistoun, I am not a Borderer."

"Not perhaps immediately, but certainly of Border lineage."

"I am not aware of it."

"Oh, but there is no question about it. I interest myself in family history, and your name is simply a corruption from 'Of Alnwick; drop the 'O' and you get Falnwick and Fenwick."

"But you have mistaken my name, Lord Germistoun, which is not Fenwick, but Denwick."

"Ah, really! Well, but, my dear sir, is it not obvious to you that they are the same? Denwick is simply d'Alnwick, so that you don't get away from the Border, nor from the Fenwicks. It only throws you a stage further back, and proves you to be a Fenwick and a Borderer of the oldest and most inveterate description. I am never at fault in such matters. Your family possessions are not in that district, however?"

"No," said Phil, thinking that, if anything, he was for the time a Highland proprietor, all his worldly possessions being contained in a battered old portmanteau now at Cosmo's lodge. "No, but I should be happy to re-establish that sort of connection with the Border."

"There may be openings there. I understand you are greatly interested in architecture. Any building projects in view at your own place?"

"The old fellow is determined to make a swell of me," thought Phil, as he laughed, and disclaimed both place and project.

"Only an abstract lover of the art? Well, I shall be happy to show you our old house. There is a bit which goes back certainly to the twelfth, some say the eleventh century. I shall be pleased to get the opinion of an expert."

Phil was a good deal puzzled by the unexpected consideration which he was receiving; but the explanation was very simple. Lord Germistoun was, as we have amply seen, a man of sudden personal prejudices—violent and unreasonable for or against their objects. Fair examples of his system were to be found in the cases of Cosmo Glencairn and Tom Wyedale respectively; and Phil Denwick was fortunate enough to share the happier experiences of the latter. Hence this complaisant garrulity, and this mysterious imputation of pedigree, property, and lore; which were merely so many ways of expressing that his lordship fancied him, and therefore assumed him, to possess the advantages to which a man thus distinguished was entitled, according to the fitness of things.

Meantime, at the other end of the table, there was no great flow of conversation. The talking men of the party were on the moor; many of the ladies only took the trouble to talk when the right men were present. Esmè was somewhat silent and constrained; conversation languished

and flickered; and Cosmo felt a certain chill creep over his spirit. He began to feel that coming to luncheon had been a mistake—the meal had better have been omitted. After divers flashes of silence, Mrs. Ravenhall, who had made gallant efforts to keep things going, at last said, pettishly,

"How deadly-lively we all are to-day! I wish these tiresome men would sometimes stay at home and amuse us."

"If it were *only* for a change," moaned Lady Bugles.

"Some of them are coming back early to play lawn-tennis," said Mrs. Crock.

"I should be sorry to count upon *that*," said Lady Bugles, who watched for Mrs. Crock.

"Oh, but it's a promise!"

"I wouldn't give much for their promises."

"Very likely not; but my faith is stronger than yours. I suppose faith depends a good deal upon experience." With which trump it was felt that Mrs. Crock took the trick from her ladyship, who had not long ago figured disastrously in a rather racy breach-of-promise case.

"Well, what *are* we to do this afternoon?" said Miss Hungerford-Snapsley.

"I'm going sketching," mewed Miss Milkington.

"Sir, she said—sir, she said," hummed Miss Snapsley; "but that won't amuse us."

"And I shan't amuse you by writing letters, of which I have a bushel to get through," said Mrs. Ravenhall. "Why not play lawn-tennis *en attendant*? I dare say Mr. Glencairn will help you."

She now saw the necessity of being more circumspect in her measures as to Cosmo; and, besides, it is obvious that a man who means mischief can do less of it when panting at lawn-tennis than in quieter aspects.

"I shall be delighted," said Cosmo.

"Till the others come," said Mrs. Crock, quickly, and added, "because when they do, it's a fixed match, you know. Perhaps your friend plays?"

"Oh yes, he does."

"Very well; then I will take you, and we'll challenge Miss Douglas and your friend."

When they went out, however, Lord Germistoun, finding Phil a sympathetic peg on which to hang his prose, claimed him for his prey, and carried him off for lionizing purposes; so one of the "cripples" was taken instead, and another set was made up by Miss Snapsley, who had, however, to content herself with the same unsatisfactory *personnel*.

"I can't play very long," said Esmè, "because I have promised to take Miss Milkington to her sketching-ground."

"How you sacrifice yourself to that creature!" said Mrs. Ravenhall, beaming approval, however.

Then the game took place; but it was a hollow affair, Cosmo and Mrs. Crock being both experts, and Esmè unable to support the heavy handicapping of the "cripple."

Other games were played, the "cripple" being tried in every combination, but with the same results; and when it was beginning to get a little hopeless, joy suddenly flashed into the face of Mrs. Crock; for Lord Ribston and two other "nice" men falsified the predictions of Lady Bugles by appearing on the scene.

"They sent whiskey instead of brandy, and forgot soda altogether," explained Ribston, with his usual candor, "so we were obliged to come home. But now that we've refreshed, we're on for a match. Miss Douglas, you and I against Mrs. Crock and Berkeley."

"Oh, *that* isn't the match, Lord Ribston! It was you and I against Miss Snapsley and Captain Berkeley."

"That isn't a law of the Swedes and Prussians, is it?"

"I can't play, Lord Ribston; I have another engagement," said Esmè.

Whereat the noble lord, who had descended the mountain partly for her sake, though mainly for the brandy, was mightily disgusted, and was not at all a pleasant partner for the widow Crock.

"I am afraid I must say 'good-bye' now, Mr. Glencairn," said Esmè. "I have kept poor Miss Milkington waiting so very long."

This was terrible! Cosmo had hardly exchanged a word with her during the whole visit; so he took heart of grace, and said, "Will you think me too importunate?—but I dare say you have forgotten all about it—the song—"

"Oh, indeed I have not forgotten it; it is copied; and if you care to have it now, I will give it to you. Will you come up to the house, or shall I send it down to you here?"

"Pray let me go to the house," said Cosmo, eagerly. "How very good of you to remember it!"

"Oh no," said Esmè. "I promised; and though I have rather repented of my promise, I am going to keep it, of course."

"But why have you repented?"

She did not answer for a moment, and then said, "I never meant any one to know anything about it, and—and I don't know why I told you—and I think—you know there is really nothing in the song—and so it seems absurd to give it to any one."

Cosmo felt an indescribable restraint; and when he said that there was much in the song, and that he should value it very highly, the words sounded, even to himself, dry and chilly.

They walked to the house in silence; and when they reached the door, Esmè begged him to wait while she went up and fetched the copy. Presently she returned, accompanied by Miss Milkington, and presented him with the song, saying, "You will keep my secret," and then checked his raptures, which threatened to break out, by adding, with a laugh, to Miss Milkington, "You don't know what a confession of guilt I have been making to Mr. Glencairn!"

"Tell me about it," said Miss Milkington, lackadaisically; "I do so like to hear about guilt!"

And this made both Esmè and Cosmo laugh, and the cloud rose a little.

"I wonder where my friend has hidden himself," said Cosmo.

"I think," said Esmè, "it is quite certain that papa has taken him to the ruin. No one escapes the ruin."

"Are you going in that direction?"

"Yes, we are. Miss Milkington wishes to sketch the Fall from a point in that quarter."

"Then may I be allowed to place myself under your guidance so far? I must go and look for Lord Germistoun and Denwick."

"Oh, certainly; but would you not rather stay and play lawn-tennis till your friend returns?"

"No," said Cosmo. "I can play tennis any day, but I can't walk with a composer and an artist any day."

"Hush!" said Esmè, laughing. "Remember."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THEY wound up the hill-side, through the woods, by a path which was unfortunately so narrow that they were obliged to move in single file; in which formation, with the strong non-conductor of Miss Milkington's person interposed between Esmè and himself, Cosmo felt that he might as well be promenading alone on the other side of the glen. But, after about ten minutes of silent pilgrimage, they diverged by another path to the right, and, again descending, came upon an open plateau, where they halted. Far beneath them, the river was just escaping from the eddies of the Fall; over against them, on a higher level, it made its first leap toward the abyss; and higher still, ivy-bound, and encircled by a few ancient and withered trees, the venerable keep seemed mournfully to contemplate its impending doom in the anguish of the caldron down below.

The great and solemn sound of the waters lent a fitting voice to the weird sublimity of the scene.

For a moment they all contemplated the grand *coup d'œil* without speaking; but Miss Milkington, who was a sketcher, and not an artist, rather impatiently broke the silence, and clamored for her "point of view"—the point of view whence as much as possible of the scene could be utilized and condensed into her caricature.

Esmè took her away some little distance, placed her in position, set her to work, and then, returning to Cosmo, said, "If you think you have time, and don't object to a scramble, you can get down from here to the level of the river, where there is a splendid view of the Fall. But I warn you that the path, which is known as 'Jacob's Ladder,' is difficult; still, if you care to venture it, I will show you where to begin the descent."

As there seemed no prospect of angelic society on the descent, Cosmo felt that he had better adhere to the heavenward end of the "Ladder," so excused himself on the plea of time.

"How," he asked, "can I get round, and up, from this to the ruin?"

Esmè described the route, which *was* rather intricate, but Cosmo feigned stupidity with great success; and after many attempts to make him understand, she desisted, laughingly, and said,

"I see you have no hump of locality, and would inevitably lose yourself, so I will take you to a point, after which you can't make a mistake."

This was, of course, exactly what Cosmo had been scheming for, and they started. He was resolved to break down from the first the sort of constraint which seemed threatening to rise between them, so he forced himself, with an effort, to talk fluently.

"We seem destined," he said, "to meet 'on the heights,' and to meet in wonderful scenery."

"You are thinking of Lake Como, and that lovely walk behind the Villa Bianca?"

"Yes; I got quite a new view of the lake by that walk: I never *really* knew its beauties before."

"I think it is the most beautiful view I know of the lake."

"And I have got quite a new view of the Er-lacht Fall to-day."

"I think here, too, we are fortunate, and have the best of it beside us."

"So that I have to thank you for twice 'lifting the veil.'"

"Or, rather, for the humble fact of living behind the veil in these two cases. What a different scene this is!"

"Yes," said Cosmo, "and how characteristic of the two countries! There, there was nothing hard, or sharp, or obtrusive; hundreds of beauties, of different kinds, lay around us, but diffused, and disposed in a sort of easy, languid grace, so that nothing was insisted upon. Here it is all concentration; eagerness, energy—like the national character. It is a battle. Look at the malignant fury of the waters; the rocks are the very picture of stern and cruel resolution, and these sombre woods and that sad old ruin can be nothing but the grim spectators of the tragedy. Everything is forced upon you; you can't forget it for an instant, for the roar of the water cries everlastingly, 'Come and see our combat!'"

"And which do you like best?"

"Like you, I have my moods, and every mood has a different preference."

Esmè looked up and laughed, "How," she asked, "do you know that I have moods?"

"Do you forget that I am a clairvoyant? Don't you remember our conversation about the picture the other night? or, rather, do you think I forget our conversation on the last walk I had with you?"

"Oh, Mr. Glencairn, do tell me more about the Sassoferrato picture!"

Cosmo, nothing loath, complied, and there ensued a long conversation of dialogue and dissertation which, lightly floating over a hundred subjects, extracted from each some subtle implication of Cosmo's love and homage.

Conversations of the sort are apt to be engrossing, so it is not wonderful that Miss Milkington came to be forgotten, and that, without observation on either side, Esmè ended in being Cosmo's guide all the way to the ruin. Recalled by reaching it, she was for hurrying back at once, but Cosmo suggested that, now she was here, a few minutes more or less could make no difference, and assuaged her laughingly that, since her father and Phil were not visible, he gravely mistrusted his unaided bump of locality to guide him back again. So she consented to remain for a few minutes, during which they explored the old castle and its precincts.

"This takes one very far back into the old world," said Cosmo.

"I think," replied Esmè, "about six hundred years."

"It has always been in your family, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Esmè; "or, rather, it has always come back to us, for it has been confiscated four

or five times—which shows that we have not been a well-conducted race, does it not?"

"Or, rather, it shows that you have not been a neutral race. It shows that your ancestors have been mixed up (which every one knows) with the history of the country, and helped to make it. To me there is something most enviable in such a descent."

"Do you think it is so very enviable?"

"Perhaps because I do not possess it."

Esmè with all the innuendoes about Cosmo's birth so fresh in her recollection, involuntarily betrayed her interest by something like a start.

"No," Cosmo continued, "I won't give that as my reason, for I am convinced of its real advantages. I think that ancient and honorable birth must be a great incitement to nobility of life, and a great help in reaching it. The man who possesses it must feel an inspiration when he looks into the past. The past must have a special voice for him, to encourage and warn him. It is impossible that he can forget that his fame or disfigure affects a grand series of traditions, and not merely himself. If he has any loyalty or reverence in his nature, he can't help feeling that he is the latest link in a chain of pure metal, and that *he* must not be the first to debase it."

"If every one felt so, how noble nobility would be!" said Esmè.

"But depend upon it, that if vast numbers did not feel so in some degree, nobility would be much less noble than it is. I do not possess it, but I can see its value. For a man like me, of brief and obscure pedigree, the past has no special voice appealing to the reverence or the romance of his character; there is no accumulated force of traditions to propel him. He must rely on himself alone. Like the more fortunate, he has, of course, the *supreme* inducements to lead a noble life; but they have a host of minor ones which touch human nature very attractively, and help it, and add something of the picturesque to duty." Cosmo paused for a moment, and then added, "Therefore, I envy the fortunate people who possess it."

Esmè said, "No doubt, if looked on as you look on it, it would be a very ennobling thing; but if one does not require such incitements—and I am sure *you* do not—I do not see that there is much to regret in the want of a long pedigree; it is only a romantic sentiment—provided, of course, one is of gentle birth."

"And what constitutes that?"

"Mr. Glencairn, surely you know better than I."

"No, I don't, Miss Douglas—indeed I don't. I wish I did. Do you suppose that *I* am of gentle birth?"

Esmè looked terribly confused, and changed color, and said, "Of course, Mr. Glencairn. How can you ask such a question?"

"Because I have grave doubts about my own case. You shall have it before you. I am well-born—extremely well-born—on the mother's side; on the father's, my pedigree is untraceable after three generations. There may be surmises, but I have no right to think of my pedigree except as absolutely a blank beyond that limit. Now, how do I stand? Is that enough? Am I of gentle birth?"

Esmè half smiled at his vehemence. "I should think," she said, "that no one could deny it; for

it cannot matter on which side the ancient descent is, and the worst side is—is" (she was thinking of its remoteness from the disgrace alleged by the fonnldng story) "respectable. You must be very difficult to satisfy."

"It is enough?" repeated Cosmo—"you say that it is enough?"

"Of course I do, Mr. Gleneairn."

"Then, for myself, I am satisfied. I require no higher patent."

"I fear," she said, smiling, "it is not a patent of much authority. My father, for instance, always accuses me of being a Radical—ever since, in a rash moment, I quoted to him that 'kind hearts are more than coronets.'"

A change came over Cosmo's face, and he said, involuntarily, and almost with a groan, "I can well imagine it."

"Well," she said, as if defending herself against Cosmo himself, "I suspect I *am* a Radical, if that kind of sentiment makes a Radical. I suppose the length of my pedigree entitles me to say what I think about the claims of long descent?"

"Undoubtedly so."

"Well, you have spoken of its advantages. I say nothing against what you say; I only doubt that they are used as you think (and I think) they ought to be, and might be used; but I retain my radical opinion."

"What?" said Cosmo: "'The rank is but the guinea's stamp?'"

"I say nothing against the rank; it is a splendid thing—because it is a great power—if it is nobly used; but it is a pitiable thing—and still because it is a great power—if it is *not* nobly used. Do you agree with me?"

"Indeed I do."

"And I *do* believe in that kind of nobility and gentlemanhood which patents and pedigrees cannot make—of heart and actions and manners. I place them above the others. I do prefer the substance to the symbol. You shudder at me as an unromantic Radical. I can't help it."

"You forget, Miss Douglas, that I am not entitled to shudder at such sentiments; but, if I could be supposed to speak impartially, I should say that they were very generous and noble. As to their being unromantic, however, I am afraid that is the last description they would receive in the world you live in, and which I also—perhaps on sufferance, perhaps only because I have money—inhabit."

"Oh, money! that is a dreadful passport to depend upon."

"Yes, it is—though it is the passport in this country nowadays to most things; and I find now, in that conviction—that it is a despicable, and, in my case, even an insufficient passport—the incitement, which I cannot derive from old traditions, to try to reach by my own achievements a standing-ground in the world which cannot be gained."

"Of course I think it is admirable to wish to be great, to determine to be great; but if it is only to assure a position in society—which, after all, is quite assured already—that seems rather a small ending for a great beginning. But I am sure I have mistaken you; *you* cannot mean that?"

She looked quickly up at him at last; for in all this time there had been none of those strange meetings of the eyes which had filled her with

so much bewilderment—she had avoided them by a conscious effort—and, looking up at him, she met his gaze, intensified beyond all its former intensity, so that it held her riveted with a power which she could not resist.

"You are right," said Cosmo, speaking in a low and earnest voice which was full of music and pathos, "and you are wrong. I desire it, not for the petty advantages of social life, but as a means to an end—an end which I *must* reach, or life, with all its aspirations, and hopes, and promises, and possibilities, will become to me only a longer or shorter interval of pain or torpor—it will be death in life."

He paused; they remained silent and motionless, rapt each on each; and to each it seemed that the beating of their own hearts was audible above the thunder of the waters shouting their battle-cry far below.

Silent and motionless, and desperately in earnest. What would he say? what would she say? who would speak first?

These problems were not solved. The irony of Fate brought an interruption.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"'LAST May a braw wooer cam' doon the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
I said there was naething I hated like men—
The deil gae wi' him to believe me, believe me!
The deil gae wi' him to believe me!'"

Blessin's on your bonny face, Miss Esmè! it's a weary time ye've been awa'; and here's auld Maggie at her post to gie ye welcome."

Thus singing, and thus speaking, a strange-looking woman suddenly presented herself before Esmè and Cosmo, as they stood in the critical situation described at the close of our last chapter. The noise of the water-fall, and their own deep abstraction, caused her approach to be unobserved; and her presence, close beside them, was announced by the first high and harsh notes of her song.

She was old, and, though neat and clean in her appearance, had that restless light in the eye which proclaims an unsettled brain. The ordinary expression "half-witted" would be unjust, for Maggie had plenty of wits, only they were dishevelled, and exercised irresponsibly and at random. It was her privilege to act as *cicerone* to such stray tourists as came to visit the Fall; and, on the days when access to the castle side of it was permitted, she was always to be found lying in wait for her prey at the farther end of a light bridge which spanned the river a little above the ruin. Her discourse on these occasions was diversified by fragments of local legend and sudden digressions into song, and even dance, which, in her wandering imagination, had probably some illustrative connection with her themes, and which, at all events, never failed to amuse her clients. From this description, old Maggie, who still lives and plies her vocation, will, no doubt, be recognized by some of our readers.

Opportune or inopportune, her sudden appearance rudely dissolved the spell which held Esmè and Cosmo in the silence of deep emotion. The former started from her abstraction in a confusion so deep that, at first, she could find no voice

to return the eccentric salutation. The old woman gave her time, however, by breaking into another snatch of song, and when it was finished Esmè was able to speak.

"I am glad to see you again, Maggie," she said, offering her hand to the woman, who raised it to her lips with all love and reverence, "and happy to see you looking so well."

"My thanks to ye, Miss Esmè; I'm aye weel—praise be blessed!—when the simmer-time comes, and brings ye back, and," she added, with a twinkle in her eye, "the towrist bodies, wi' their saxpences and sickle. And wha's the bonny gentleman? He'll no be a towrist?"

"This is the gentleman who is living at Finmore, Maggie; and I've been doing your work for you. I've been showing him the ruins, and telling him some of the old stories."

"And maybe it was an auld story he was tellin' you when I cam' ower the knowe. I am no a spae-wife, Miss Esmè, and I haena the second sicht—weel, aweel—

"My heart is sair—I daurna tell—
My heart is sair for somebody!
I wad dae—what wad I not?
For the sake o' somebody;"

and aiblins the bonny gentleman will hae a saxpence in his pouch to gie auld Maggie, for a' he binna a towrist."

Cosmo at once took the hint, responding to it very liberally, in hopes of getting rid of the old woman, whose musical illustrations were so unpleasantly *apropos*.

"Eh! thank ye kindly, sir!" she cried; "eh! but this is nae towrist's fee! Siller, and siller, and siller! There's luck in three, and there's luck in nine! I'm nae spae-wife, as my leddy kens, but I'm thinkin' ye'll be something great and gran' yersel—a belted earl maybe, or a baron bauld, mayhap?"

"No, Maggie," said Cosmo, laughing, "I'm neither belted earl nor baron bold."

"Aweel, ye hae the look o't, my bonny lad; and whiles wha isna suld be, and wha suldna be, is; and your time may come some day—wha kens?"

"Bide ye yet, and bide ye yet,
Ye dinna ken what may betide ye yet."

And I wuss ye weel, for if ye hae the heigh look, ye hae the free han'; and that's no aye the way o't. His lordship's sel's name ower free wi' the bawbees. Mony's the time I've tellt him *that*. 'The han' o' a Douglas,' quo' I, 'suld aye be tight on the sword, and slack on the purse,' quo' I. Hoots! he'll no heed me; I'm jist daft auld Maggie, ye ken."

"Well, Maggie," said Esmè, "we must be going. I don't think there's anything more here that Mr. Glencairn would care to see."

"Troth, Miss Esmè, ye'll be richt—naething mair that he wad care to see, if I ken him ava—for it's no the ruins, and it's no the Fa', that's brocht him here the day. Na, na! it's something else, as ye ken brawly, my winsome leddy."

"Oh, luve will venture in whaur it daurna weel be seen,

And luve will venture in whaur wisdom ance has been;

But I will doon yon river rove, amang the woods
sae green,

And a' to pu' a posie to my ain dear May."

Hoots! ye'll no be heedn' me—I'm jist daft auld Maggie, ye ken." And here the old woman varied the entertainment by dancing a pretty long bout of the "Highland fling," humming the notes of a strathspey for music, and conducting the performance with a solemnity of expression in grotesque contrast with the wild vigor of her "footing."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Cosmo, with rage and despair in his heart, when she came to a halt; "and now we must say good-bye."

"What's yer hurry?"

"Well, it's growing late, and I must be getting home. I'll come back another day and hear all your old stories."

"Wait a wee till I dance ye 'Gillie Callum.'"

"Not to-day, Maggie; we must really be going."

"Aweel, I'll see ye aff my ain domain. I culdna dae less, ye ken."

To be forestalled in your own declaration of love by a mad woman, who shouts your tender secret in transparent parables of grotesque song, accompanied with crazy dancing! *Lugete Veneres Cupidinesque!* Could anything be more crushing to a transcendental lover? And, to a maiden for whose wondering eyes a doubtful light is just beginning to dawn upon the world of love, could anything be more overwhelming than an illumination so garish, brusquely flashed upon the mysterious region which her timid feet are in the act of entering? With a burning blush fixed in her fair cheek, Esmè, with downcast eyes, walked hurriedly and in silence; and Cosmo, by her side, moved also without a word, paralyzed by his sudden drop from the pinnacle of high emotion, into the bathos wrought by Maggie's extravaganza. The old woman followed close behind them—now, fortunately, launched on an endless legend, shouted to ears which did not listen, and enlivened with bursts of song which rung, weird and shrill, above the waters' roar.

In these unhappy circumstances they rejoined Miss Milkington, upon whom Maggie, mistaking her for a tourist, instantly pounced, dancing up to her and chanting her *cicerone's* formula, "Will ye see the Fa', bonny leddy? Will ye see the auld Douglas Castle, bonny leddy? And I'll sing ye a sang, and tell ye a tale, and dance ye 'Gillie Callum,' and a' for a thank-ye and a saxpence, or maybe twa, bonny leddy. Hae! gie me the satchel—I'll carry't for ye;" and she was for possessing herself of Miss Milkington's drawing paraphernalia, but that young lady drew back, scared by the wild aspect of the old woman.

"Hoots!" cried Maggie, "what ails ye?" I'm jist daft Maggie, ye ken. Hae! gie me the satchel," and she again closed with her victim, who again started back, piping tremulously,

"Go away! go away! you horrid, dreadful person!"

Maggie drew herself up in offended dignity.

"Dreedfu' person!" she exclaimed; "is it me? Hard ye e'er the like o't? Afore my leddy, too! and me a vassal o' Dunerlacht! and you a towrist body frae Dundee, mayhap, wha kens? wi' a face like soured sowans, and—"

"Hush, hush, hush, Maggie!" cried Esmè; "this lady is a friend of mine; and if you say another word I shall be very angry. Go away at once. I am ashamed of you!"

"Dear heart, Miss Esmè! what wye was I to ken? The gentles ne'er misca'n me; but I beg the bonny miss's pardon; and aiblins she'll hae a saxpence for auld Meg, jist to show there's nae ill-will atween us."

"You shall get nothing more to-day, Maggie. Go away. I am extremely displeased with you."

"Diinna say that, Miss Esmè—but I'll gang: and good-bye to ye, my leddy; and to you, my bonny miss—I'm wae for sayin' yon aboot the sowans; and to you, my bonny gentleman. I wuss ye weel; and ye maunna look sae dowie;

"'Ne'er break yer heart for ae rebute,
But think upon it still, jo!
Then gin the lassie winna do't,
Ye'll fin' anither will, jo!'"

with which parting counsel Maggie took her departure, and went carolling away back to her "ain domain," having performed to perfection the functions of that awful social pest, the *enfant terrible*, and in his most favorite sphere of action.

And now, if Miss Milkington had been neutral and useless all her life, she was really serviceable at last; for, without her presence, what could Esmè and Cosmo have done? Could they have returned to the conditions in which the old woman had surprised them? Surely not; the sensitive delicacy of these conditions made that impossible, after Meg's interlude. No; they were both overwhelmed with embarrassment; and they must have either acknowledged this by a desperate silence, or betrayed it in a *fiasco* of commonplace talk—miserable expedients both of them; and to either would have attached this danger, that it might have developed a new point of departure for the relations between Cosmo and Esmè, which had now begun to move, pretty definitely, in a certain direction. Under these circumstances, Miss Milkington was a godsend; and it was wonderful to see the sudden interest which both her companions displayed in her and her artistic performances, and the persistence with which their remarks were addressed exclusively to her on the homeward route. This circumstance, and a certain feverish loquacity which they displayed, might have been suggestive to the average female mind; but Miss Milkington's wits were rather below par, and her only emotion at the conclusion of the journey was one of relief at her escape from so unwonted conversational strain.

Lord Germistoun and Phil Denwick had just returned from some other quarter, and were standing at the castle door, when the party arrived. Esmè, with somewhat suspicious *empressment*, hastened to tell her father of their vain search for him at the ruins—even venturing to speak of it as a disappointment—and described the old woman's encounter with Miss Milkington, as though it had been the prominent feature in the afternoon's adventures. Lord Germistoun, loftily unsuspecting, and glad of an occasion against old Maggie, whose freedom of speech, but for Esmè's intervention, would have long since procured her disestablishment, "extended" himself with some ardor on this matter, vowing that Maggie was a distinct pest, and that the cup of her abominations was now full to the brim.

"If Miss Milkington desires it," said his lordship, "the woman shall be cashiered at once."

"Oh yes, *please*," lisped Miss Milkington; "she is so dreadfully horrid!"

"No, no, no!" cried Esmè; "I won't have her cashiered! It was all from a mistake. Maggie mistook Miss Milkington for one of the tourists, whom she looks upon as her serfs. That was all; and I only mentioned it as a joke—not to get the poor old thing into trouble."

This was really magnanimous, considering the enormity of Maggie's unreported offenses, and it prevailed, Lord Germistoun dropping the bone after a little further worrying over it.

"I greatly admired the Fall from this side, Lord Germistoun," said Cosmo; "it is quite the best point of view I have seen."

"We have always considered it undeniably the best point of view," replied Lord Germistoun; "and if you, Mr. Denwick, do me the favor to visit me again, I shall hope to introduce you to it."

Phil expressed his acknowledgments; and as their dog-cart now drove up, the young men made their adieux.

"Good-bye," said Cosmo to Esmè.

"Good-bye," she murmured: her eyes had not met his since old Maggie's intervention at the Fall, and they were still cast down.

"Good-bye," he repeated, retaining her hand, so that she looked up involuntarily into his face, and there again read the earnest story of his love—legible, *now*, beyond any misinterpretation. A sudden blush flashed over her fair brow, and she drooped those beautiful eyes, in which there was trouble, but no longer any bewilderment.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHILE the afternoon had been occupied for Esmè and Cosmo by these strange events, Lord Germistoun and Phil had passed it together in a *tête-à-tête*, characterized by dreary monologue on his lordship's part, and the despairing attention of amiable docility on the side of his companion. They had thoroughly "done" the castle, within and without. Phil had had to pay dearly for his imputed cunning in architecture, by diving into many mouldy dungeons, and scaling the tortuous stairs of many a rickety turret; for everywhere there was an "object of interest," and on each Lord Germistoun descanted at length. Then there were the traditions of the place, complex and numerous; and from each section of the discourse an inference had to be drawn to the personal glorification of his lordship, who, somehow, contrived to take credit for everything, from a gargyle to a ghost. Thus it took a considerable time to exhaust the castle; and when that was done, Lord Germistoun carried Phil off to see the bridge and gate-house, which were modern, though in the ancient style, and on which the noble proprietor greatly prided himself, stating them to be from his own design. "I found that the architects were making a botch of the business, so I took it into my own hands, and did it myself, with, I venture to think, respectable results." This legend had been current for forty years, so that, by the law of prescription, at least, it was entitled to the honors of veracious history.

As they walked down from the castle, Phil, re-

marking on the beauty of the scenery, happened to say how grateful he felt to Cosmo for giving him the chance of visiting it; and Lord Germistounne, with "the mystery" still haunting his fancy, thought the present might be a good opportunity for probing it, and set about doing so accordingly.

"You are an old friend of his, I believe?" he inquired.

"Yes, Glencairn is my oldest, and I may certainly say, my best friend."

"School friendships are very binding."

"We were not school-fellows, but our friendship dates farther back than school-days—in fact it is hereditary; our fathers, and even our grandfathers, were friends."

"Hum! country neighbors, perhaps?"

"No, not exactly that. They were very much connected in business, I believe, and my grandfather was guardian to Glencairn's father."

"Ah, indeed! That naturally constitutes a tie."

"It has not made much of a tie between me and old Mr. Glencairn," said Phil, laughing; "but, after all, that was probably due to my fault more than—"

"You catch a view of the bridge here, Mr. Denwick, which I think is effective."

"It is indeed," said Phil, "most effective;" and when it had been duly admired, Lord Germistounne resumed—"But I beg your pardon; I interrupted you. You were about to relate some facetious incident in connection with Mr. Glencairn's father!"

"Oh no! I once rejected some advice of his, at which he was very angry, and I have not seen him since—that was all."

"It would appear that the gentleman is arbitrary."

"Yes, I believe he is rather an arbitrary man; and when a man of that sort is consulted on a matter connected with his own specialty, he expects to have his advice taken."

"His specialty, you say?"

"Yes, I consulted him about an investment; and I suppose Mr. Glencairn is at the top of the tree in finance matters."

"May I ask you, and what, Mr. Glencairn is?"

"Oh, don't you know?"

"Is it very remarkable that I should not know?"

"Not at all; I merely fancied, somehow, that you did. He was the head of an important firm in the iron trade, and is now chairman of a company which took over the business; besides which, he is a great—I don't exactly know what you call it; 'financial operator' is, I believe, the expression."

"Why!" cried Lord Germistounne, in great astonishment, "you must mean Archibald Glencairn?"

"Yes, I do. The title of the company is 'Archibald Glencairn & Co., Limited.'"

"I have some reason to know about it; but Archibald Glencairn—surely *he* is not your friend's father?"

"Indeed he is."

"Some one distinctly assured me to the contrary; and besides, I always understood that the individual in question is a bachelor, and a kind of hermit, living alone in some remote quarter.

I know it is next to impossible to get a personal interview with him—a symptom I have never liked in the man—a distinctly suspicious symptom."

"Well, he is Glencairn's father; he lives as you say, and has been long a widower. But you know him, after all, Lord Germistounne?"

"In a business way, I do; but only in a business way. His firm had all my Fernichall minerals, and my Welsh field into the bargain; and in consideration of this, on the formation of the company, I was induced to become a shareholder to a considerable extent. I trust my confidence was justified."

"I have full confidence in the company; and I speak as a prospective shareholder."

"Oh, indeed! Well, you know, the dividends have not been what we anticipated: there has been a continuous diminution."

"But we must consider the general stagnation of trade," cried Phil, who had heard Mr. Hopper in apology a hundred times; "and then, there is a guaranteed minimum."

"Yes; that is to say, there is Mr. Archibald Glencairn."

"Who is a tower of strength. His credit is most assured, and his integrity is proverbial."

"Integrity is a good thing, but it is not capital."

"Oh, but he has an immense capital."

"With which he 'operates financially,' I tell you frankly, the man did not impress me favorably—very much the reverse. I have only met him once. You can't meet him—he won't let you meet him. He skulks—by the Lord Harry, skulks! and if you do meet him, he insults you. My dealings with him have been, with one exception, by correspondence, and his tone on paper is never what it ought to be—curt and self-sufficient, and, in addressing me, quite devoid of that recognition of my status in the world, not to say in his company, which I have a right to expect; and I shall not soon forget the way he received me on the one occasion when I succeeded in getting access to him. He didn't rise, he kept his hat on his head, he continued his writing, and actually motioned me—*me!*—to a chair, with his infernal pen, just as if I had been a—*a* huckster like himself! I at once stated roundly that my time was too valuable to be trifled with in that fashion; and what do you suppose the fellow replied, almost without looking up? Why, that it was his rule (*his rule!*) to transact business by correspondence alone; and that if I chose to force him out of his groove, to his great inconvenience, I must expect inconvenience to myself. Then, when I began to remonstrate temperately, but firmly, he held up his hand!—to *me!*—to impose silence, by the Lord Harry! Of course I at once left him, and you may be very sure I have not repeated the experiment of calling upon him. The man is arrogance personified, and arrogance is the parent of recklessness—a quality which is not reassuring in the chairman and guarantor of a company. I have my uneasy moments about the man, I can tell you. And so *he* is your friend's father? Hum!"

"I have always heard the highest opinions of his honor and sagacity; but his manner is certainly brusque and disagreeable—so very unlike his son's."

"Hum! The son is not connected with the business—with the company?"

"Oh no, he has a large private fortune; though, by-the-bye, indirectly through me, he is now becoming connected with the company."

And here true-hearted Phil, full of enthusiasm for his friend's generosity, impulsively related what noble things Cosmo was doing for him. The narrative failed to evoke the admiration anticipated, on Lord Germistoun's part, who said, dryly, "When you have reached my time of life, Mr. Denwick, you will know that there are many wheels within wheels in financial matters; and that in transactions like this—though I trust your case may be exceptional—a *quid pro quo* is invariably extracted."

"Impossible in my case. Glencairn knows only too well that he couldn't get a *quid* out of me. I feel certain he would have given me the money as an unconditional present, if he had thought it for my good—if I would have accepted it, that is to say."

"Ha! hum! indeed! There, now, take the whole effect of that bridge and gate-house, and say what you think of an architect who would have placed the gate on this side."

Lord Germistoun had got the information he desired, and Cosmo's merits not being a congenial theme, he changed the subject abruptly. He had got the desired intelligence; and though the foundling theory lay in ruins, it afforded his prejudice some consolation to learn that Cosmo was the son of so objectionable a parent.

"Well, I have probed the mystery about this Mr. Glencairn," he said that evening to Mrs. Ravenhall.

"Have you *really*, Lord Germistoun? How clever of you! Now, *do* tell me. I suppose Lady Bugles was mistaken. I am afraid you are going to dissolve the little romance. There is something so divinely romantic about foundlings! Well?"

"There is nothing romantic about his origin. Quite the reverse. His father is a City man of the most flagrant and offensive description—purse-proud, arrogant, a speculator."

"And vulgar, of course?"

"Vulgar! The man is distinctly a brute." Then he repeated the history of his cavalier reception by Mr. Glencairn.

"Ah," said Mrs. Ravenhall, "I felt there was something wrong."

"My instincts never deceive me. I always had my misgivings about the young man."

"How sly of him to conceal all this!"

"That is quite of a piece with the rest of the—ahem!—business."

"Now I think of it, there is something artificial and disingenuous in his manner and expression, though he is certainly well-bred enough. Now everything is explained; the necessity for constant dissimulation puts a strain on the manner naturally."

"But what business has he to go dissimulating about in society?"

"It certainly leaves a painful impression on the mind. A lady, of course, feels it more keenly than a gentleman. She knows so well what hazards there are for her own sex in the devices of clever adventurers."

"Well, 'adventurer' is possibly too strong a word."

"Perhaps it is, but it is hard to find a milder substitute."

"You see, the young man is wealthy, and 'adventurer' implies the reverse."

"True; but, dear Lord Germistoun, pardon me, a man may have designs unconnected with money which are still unjustifiable in his position; and if he conceals his position to carry out his projects, he is, in a certain sense, an adventurer, I think."

"Very true, very true."

"And I confess it always makes me tremble when I see persons of this sort brought into contact with girls in whom I feel interest."

"Conceivably they might be most dangerous; but fortunately, in this case, our hero seems to have no attractions for the fair sex. I think they seem quite unanimous in making fun of him here. The fact is, a man so enamored of himself as this gentleman appears to be, is devoid of attraction for women. I think," he added, with a dry laugh, "we need have no apprehensions for Lady Bugles's peace of mind."

"Oh—Lady Bugles! ha! ha! I wasn't thinking of *her*. If it were only Lady Bugles, I should be spared much anxiety."

"Trust an old man of the world, Mrs. Ravenhall, and dismiss anxiety for any of your young *protégées*. This young man is not the stuff of which lady-killers are made; though possibly some of them might be attracted by his fortune, and, if that were so, I suppose neither you nor I need feel any affliction. But a lady-killer! No, no. I think I ought to know something on that subject."

"The less you encourage him to come here, Lord Germistoun, the safer it will be, I assure you," said Mrs. Ravenhall, goaded on by his maddening obtuseness to all her hints.

"Encourage him, my dear lady! what are you talking of? I never fancied the fellow; and after these discoveries, you may be sure I shall only have such intercourse with him as the claims of neighborhood rigorously demand."

"I hope that will not amount to much."

"You may trust me, I think, to know exactly what is fit and proper in such matters," said his lordship, his crest palpably rising at Mrs. Ravenhall's pertinacity.

"The egotism and vanity of this old imbecile make him simply impenetrable," she thought to herself; but not venturing on any broader hints for the present, she assured the old lord that his tact and discretion were infallible, and so dropped the subject.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE next day being Sunday, Mrs. Ravenhall had one of her "tiresome headaches." In London she would not, for worlds, have been absent from her post in a certain fashionable sanctuary, where the *cultus* of the bonnet was very devoutly performed; but under circumstances like the present, where there was an absence of any real devotional inducement, the tiresome affliction usually supervened, and, as on this occasion, kept her away from church. The quiet and leisure secured to her by the absence of the party, she devoted, like a ministry outvoted in the House, to the "consideration of her position,"

which she found to be very far indeed from satisfactory. For many a week, now, she had toiled and spun for her incorrigible brother; sacrifices innumerable she had made of time, convenience, and even money. In return he had amused her with false hopes and endless postponements; and at last, when the rival interest of sport had come into competition, he appeared to have abandoned all consideration of that which ought to have been paramount. And while Tom thus remained inactive, perils thickened from other quarters. Lord Ribston was obviously in the field, and would, doubtless, declare himself before long. Possibly there was not much to be apprehended in that fact; but Cosmo Glencairn was also in the field, and her instinctive suspicion that he was dangerous had now ripened into the firmest conviction. All her manoeuvres against him had hitherto failed. She had done her best to make him ridiculous with the party at the castle, and so, indirectly, with Esmé; but her principal aim had not been reached. Her innuendoes about his birth had led to nothing but a discovery of the truth, which had done no good; for Lord Germinston's dislike for Cosmo was a foregone conclusion, which did not require to be quickened. Her hints to his lordship had missed fire; her direct action with Esmé had only roused a spirit of championship in the latter, which Mrs. Ravenhall knew to be full of peril. Miss Milkington had apprised her of the excursion to the ruins, and she felt that, if a few such opportunities were to recur, Cosmo, desperately in love and resolute, as he clearly was, might soon succeed in capturing the affections of the heiress.

The situation was discouraging in the extreme. She felt baffled and powerless, and Tom would not help her. She had but one hope, and it was this: Esmé had evidently the most cordial liking for Tom; she and he were on terms of the easiest intimacy. That, indeed, precluded the idea of *love* on her part. But might it not be possible—before she was thus affected from another quarter, before she knew the meaning of love at all—might it not be possible for Tom to succeed by a sort of *coup de main*, in which surprise on her part, and exceptional energy upon his, should extract from the warmth of her friendship, and her inexperience and simplicity, the prize which he aimed at? If once her heart knew what love was, it would be too late. Possibly, not probably, however, it was already too late. In any case, this seemed the sole device remaining—a forlorn-hope, perhaps, but the only one. But would Tom entertain it? Well, if he would not, she resolved to wash her hands of him. She dearly loved success for its own sake, and that passion had helped to support her in many trials; but she was growing weary of this long uphill fight without allies. She was now very much inclined to own herself beaten, and abandon it; and her just resentment against her brother had no small influence in drawing her to this conclusion. "Well," she said, "I will give him this one more chance; and if he doesn't choose to take my view, I'll be done with him and his affairs."

In the midst of these meditations, she was disturbed by a knock at the door. Hastily snatching up a Church Service, she invited the knock-er to enter, when who but Tom himself should

make his appearance? That worthy had also absented himself from church by a not very remarkable coincidence; but as he had recently been shy of anything like a *tête-à-tête* with his sister, it was singular that he should have sought this interview, and timed it so opportunely. His face was excessively lugubrious, and he carried in his hand a bundle of papers, which his sister at once recognized as specimens of a kind of literature with which the post very frequently favored him.

"Not at church?" said Mrs. Ravenhall, very dryly.

"No, Lucy; the devil is too sick even to be a monk to-day."

"Well, if you *will* sit up all night in the smoking-room—"

"Hang the smoking-room! that has nothing to do with it. I'm sick of life!" And he dashed his papers vehemently on to the floor.

"Pray don't litter my room; and please remember that I have a headache," said his sister.

"Headache! What is a headache, compared with total collapse and ruin?"

"I'm not in a position to judge; the headache is quite bad enough for me, I know."

"What selfish humbugs women are!" cried Tom, ferociously.

"I dare say you're right," said Mrs. Ravenhall, languidly; "but don't you think you had better go and take a walk? I don't feel quite equal to tragedy this morning, and that seems to be your programme."

"Don't drive me mad, Lucy. You see before you a desperate man."

"And I invite him to relieve me of the spectacle, which has none of the charm of novelty. I really wish you would go. You can see that I am at my exercises; and besides, my headache is no trifle."

"Very well, good-bye; I'm off, finally;" and he gathered up his papers. "You may sneer at my desperation as much as you please; but it's true *this* time. Good-bye; you may as well shake hands."

"Good-bye," said Mrs. Ravenhall, and gave her hand with contemptuous indifference.

Tom went resolutely to the door and opened it; but before he disappeared, his sister called to him, "Tom!"

"Well?"

"What do you mean? Where are you going to?"

"Out of this cursed country."

"But where?"

"I haven't quite decided. I'm going to emigrate; it may be to Paphlagonia—or—or—Otaheite. I don't know. I'm going, at all events."

"And why this sudden resolution?"

"Why? Just look at these letters!"

"Oh no, no; please not!"

"Then why on earth do you stop me?" and he turned his face again in the direction of Paphlagonia.

Mrs. Ravenhall, recognizing in his more than ordinary disturbance a possible basis of operations, again recalled him.

"I suppose," she said, "it is only the old story?"

"With a difference—for the worse. Just listen. I wrote to a whole lot of duns some time ago—when I was going to Italy—and said that,

as I was obliged to be absent on a mission which involved uncertainty of address, for six months or so, they had better make any financial remarks which might occur to them in the interval to my solicitor. I wrote also to him, and said that I was off on a promiscuous cruise, and that I should feel obliged by his making the best fight he could with any creditors of mine who might apply to him during my absence. I also told him (which was quite true) that I had instructed my banker to pay to him any remittances which might come to his hands for my credit; and these funds I authorized him to administer, at his discretion, for the appeasement of my creditors.

"Well, to cut the matter short, the solicitor has proved to be lymphatic, and without breadth of view; unequal, in fact, to the strain. He writes—here is his contemptible effusion—that he must decline to have his offices mobbed, morn, noon, and night, by my creditors. He states that one man—a tobaccoist, and a very turbulent fellow (I know the beast!)—may really be said to reside in his anteroom; and he can't stand it any longer. The banker, he says, derides (so like *him*!) the idea of remittances; there are four county court summonses out against me, and two judgments; and he adds that his life is made a burden to him—as if that were a matter of the faintest interest to *me*! He suggests that I should remit to him at once, say five hundred pounds; and estimates that a further large sum—say a thousand, roughly—will be necessary within the next few weeks, or there will be what he calls 'grave complications.' But the sting of the letter is in its tail. If, he says, the named sum is not *at once* forth-coming, he will be obliged to divulge my address, and abandon his business connection with me. There! what do you think of that?"

"Think of it? It is simply disgraceful."

"Yes, it *does* show callousness. Still, we must remember that the fellow is a half-bred—not entitled by birth to chivalrous instincts."

"You know perfectly well that it is to *you* I am alluding."

"Me!"

"Of course. Your conduct is absolutely revolting."

"I came here expecting sympathy, Lucy," said Tom, with mournful dignity, "and not insult, from you, at least. I shall now leave you."

"And may I ask how this five hundred pounds is to be paid?"

"That, I think, is a problem which we may safely leave the expectant payees to solve among themselves, if they can. It no longer interests me—not even as an abstract question. I propose to avoid any discussion of it with them, which could only lead to angry recriminations, and not impossibly to the curtailment of my personal liberty, which I could never brook. No! I will escape from these annoyances, and seek an asylum, and a new point of departure, among simpler forms of life."

"In plain words, 'run away from your creditors?'"

"I can quite conceive that the ruffians might describe it in some such way."

"And so you are off at once on this reputable journey?"

"Well, there seems to be nothing else for it. If I waited, you see, till Wednesday or so, I

should probably have to receive certain visitors here whom I would rather avoid. One has a delicacy in receiving any visitors in another man's house; and in this case, it would be specially distasteful."

"Whom on earth do you mean?"

"Bailiffs."

"What! do you dare to bring such people about Lord Germistoun's house?"

"Ha! ha! 'Dare!' Unfortunately they don't require 'bringing.' They will have no delicacy about coming uninvited."

"This is disgrace for all of us!"

"Yes, it is, you know; that's why I came here just now: but your unreasonable heat seems to make any business-like conversation impracticable; so no good purpose can be served by protracting the scene."

"These wretches will actually come here and arrest you?"

"No, they won't arrest *me*—I'll take care of *that*; but they will come here and look for me, and put a watch over the house; probably arrest Ribston or Berkeley, or some other fellow, by mistake, now and then—perhaps Lord Germistoun himself, if they fall in with him in the dark. Of course, I shall be on the friendly billows by that time. Ha! ha! now I think of it, there is something awfully funny in the idea of their arresting Ribby, or the old patriarch! Ha! ha! ha! how they *will* swear! The castle will be quite wakened up."

"Monster! have you no consideration for your family?"

"Frankly, no. There must be reciprocity in such matters, and my family have no consideration for me."

"I never heard of such ingratitude!"

"We should never agree about that; so, on the whole, I think I'll go now."

"Tell me why you came here just now?"

"My dear Lucy, because I thought it right so far to consider my family, though they don't consider me, as to let them know, through you, what is impending; so that, if they thought it worth their while, they might save themselves from this little scandal. It was the merest matter of courtesy on my part. The previous conduct of the family makes it evident that I could have no selfish hopes. Now I have discharged my duty, and may go."

"Even if the family were willing, I don't know where the money could come from—I don't know who has it?"

"No, no, of course not. Let us drop the subject. Lord Germistoun, to be sure, will blow his bugle pretty loudly over the matter; but, after all, that won't break any of the family's bones."

"And here, with this catastrophe staring you in the face, you have been neglecting the only obvious means of extricating yourself!"

"If you refer to Miss Douglas, I deny the neglect; and even were I engaged to her at this moment, pray reflect that I could not ask her father for the money now."

"Ah! in these circumstances we might have come forward."

"You would then have discovered where the money could come from! Well, well, I forgive you. Poor human nature! Go on."

"Well, then, as to not neglecting your opportunities—"

"Your whole view of me in this matter, Lucy, is based on a misconception of my tactics, which have been pursued with the dogged persistence of a sluthound."

"Really? They have been wonderfully masked."

"That's the art of the thing. Listen. You wished me to carry on a thunder-and-lightning courtship; well, I saw, almost at once, that that was inexpedient for many reasons. I therefore changed front, and resolved to proceed by a slower method, but, I think, a surer one—and that was, gradually and almost imperceptibly, to make myself necessary to Miss Douglas's existence."

"By avoiding her persistently, and shooting grouse from morning till night?"

"The art of the thing again! Success has attended my procedure."

"You are necessary to her existence now, are you?"

"Very nearly; but I don't go quite so far as that. What I mean to say is, that she likes me immensely—more than any one else, in her own quiet way. You won't venture to deny that her liking is obvious?"

"Then why don't you persevere?"

"I *am* persevering, slowly and unostentatiously, but it takes time. And just as success seems within my grasp, this horrible explosion takes place, and my scheme is ruined."

"I should have said, 'Just as success was finally escaping your grasp.'"

"Yes, *you* would, I dare say. That's our point of divergence. I am only telling you what *my* view was, and what my scheme has been."

"Are you serious?"

"Is a man in my situation likely to jest?"

"You think she would accept you now if you proposed?"

"Very likely; but it would be safer to give her more time. But, of course, that's out of the question now; so what's the good of talking? I say! only fancy if the bailiffs were to arrive just as Lord Germistoun had given me his blessing! Ha! ha! Something like a dramatic situation, eh? Did it ever occur to you, by-the-bye, what a capital Sir Anthony Absolute his lordship would make?"

"Pray let us keep to the matter in hand. As you say, it is out of the question to give her more time. I don't mean because of these wretches who are coming to hunt you: I mean that there are other influences at work—some one else has got his designs upon her."

"Pooh, pooh! nonsense! Old Ribby? She laughs at him."

"Ah! I don't mean Lord Ribston. There is Mr. Glencairn—"

"Ridiculous! He repudiated the idea altogether."

"And others," added Mrs. Ravenhall, deeming it hazardous to dwell too forcibly on Cosmo.

"Well, I don't care whom you mean. No one else has a chance."

"You are wonderfully confident."

"With a little more time—"

"Which you can't have."

"If these bailiffs could be stopped!"

"I have my very strong opinion that even if they could be stopped, your only chance would

lie in instant action—your only chance. Other influences are working, and working rapidly; take my word for it."

"Well, well, we needn't worry about it. I must go and see about my packing."

"And leave the family to be disgraced?"

"How *can* I help it?"

"Listen. Here is the very last effort I mean to make for you, and I will not make it without a most stringent condition. With the view I take of this affair with Miss Douglas, I say immediate action is absolutely necessary. I may be right or I may be wrong; that is my view, and I mean to make it the foundation of a proposal to you, which is this: If you will now promise me, upon your sacred honor as a gentleman, to propose to Miss Douglas within forty-eight hours, you shall have the money you require for these wretches. It will greatly hamper me; but I shall trust to being repaid, either by your brother or by yourself, when you are able. What do you say?"

"Lucy! Say? It's awfully sudden; it takes my breath away!" stammered Tom, who had, of course, been playing for this stake all the time, but without these terrible conditions.

"That is *positively* the only condition on which I will move a hand to help you," continued Mrs. Ravenhall.

"And the further sum—roughly, a thousand pounds—which will be required a few weeks later?"

"Well, I will promise to use my influence about that with your brother, if, after honestly carrying out your conditions, you honestly fail with Miss Douglas."

Tom walked to the window and mused. After all, he was in a terrible hole, and this would extricate him, and leave him something in hand—the sums "roughly" required by his solicitor being probably somewhere about three hundred and fifty, and eight hundred, rather than five hundred and a thousand, the respective balances representing, more or less, the little profit which Tom counted upon making on such cash transactions as his family undertook for his benefit.

Lax morality this for a man who could still respect his word of honor; but the continued pressure of money difficulties, and the perpetual shifts which they involved, had no doubt left their mark upon Tom, as they have constantly left it upon men of a higher stamp. And besides, Tom had what he called "strong perceptions of the family tie," which involved the firm conviction that his family were, by the law of natural affection, bound to "see him through" his scrapes; and that since they now pretty uniformly failed to recognize this duty, he was justified in levying on them, and taking any advantage of them which presented itself. Proceeding with his reflections, he felt that he had to face a refusal; he was confident that that was in store for him; but what of that? It happened to lots of fellows; and at this moment he was by no means sure that it was not preferable to the alternative, with all its prospective advantages. The act of proposal was really the worst of it. While he thus reflected, Mrs. Ravenhall arose, and, opening a despatch-box, took therefrom a check-book, and began leisurely to turn over the foils thereof. There was considerable art in this suggestive movement. Tom's eye kindled.

"Well, Lucy," he said, "I think it's a risk; but I'll close. I'll take the plunge."

"Upon your sacred word of honor, and within forty-eight hours?"

"Within that time, upon my sacred word of honor."

"Then I am satisfied."

"I dare say; but I'm not; no more are the bailiffs. This is distinctly a ready-money transaction."

"Oh, you require the check *now*?"

"Clearly, unless you wish the bailiffs to mix themselves up with my proposal."

Mrs. Ravenhall took up a pen and detached a check, Tom standing over her.

"There are generally," he said, "some vexatious little law expenses in staying proceedings. I suspect it will be better to err on the safe side, and make the sum guineas. Five hundred guineas—in other words, five hundred and twenty-five pounds. There! that's it. Thanks."

"Now, remember! by this time on Tuesday."

"You have my word of honor, Lucy; but make it Tuesday midnight. You know one can't command one's time during the day here, and the evening opportunities will be more plentiful."

"Very well; but it's the very last concession."

"All right. Now I feel quite faint with all this agitation. I must positively go and rub in a little sherry."

The thieves' compact being thus concluded, Mrs. Ravenhall lay back on the sofa, and thought it over. On the whole, it was her own scheme, with the slight difference that it was more expensive by five hundred and twenty-five pounds; but she was not disposed to make much of that, every other road, to success being absolutely barred. If he should succeed, what a *coup*, what a triumph, it would be! Such a brilliant match! such wealth, *prestige*, and position, and all to be acquired by a spendthrift younger son, through the *finesse* of his capable sister! Besides the solid family advantages, there was reputation to accrue from that—ay, that there was! And then, from a minor point of view, Esmè in herself would be so excellent a wife for Tom!—a safe wife, upon whom, even in these risky days, one might certainly depend. Altogether it would be worth far more than all her trouble and sacrifice, if he should succeed. But could he? He seemed strangely confident of his footing with Esmè; and they certainly appeared to be on the best of terms. But could he be trusted to play his cards? There was the main doubt. Ah! she must rehearse it with him, and send him to the trial equipped, *cap-à-pie*, with the armor of her worldly craft. The die would soon be cast. Forty-eight hours, and then—victory; or, if defeat, at least also a release from a long and harassing campaign.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It took a good deal to damp Tom Wyedale's spirits. Blessed by nature with a very buoyant temperament, neither dyspepsia nor any sense of the responsibilities of life disturbed him; and familiarity with the only kind of difficulties which constantly beset him enabled him, as a rule, to

carry himself with cheerful *nonchalance* in circumstances which usually darken the faces of most men. In the circumstances, however, which now confronted him, his past experience could do nothing to help or reassure him; and as he contemplated them on that Sunday afternoon after leaving his sister, his courage gradually oozed away. Sitting alone by the river, in a remote part of the glen, he spent the long hours between luncheon and dinner in revolving various schemes and considerations in connection with the ordeal which lay before him. He felt that it was now absolutely inevitable. Slippery though he was, the words "sacred honor of a gentleman" involved a pledge which he would not have dreamed of violating; and even if he would (which we are far from asserting) have attempted to fulfil his engagement to the letter, while practically evading it, by some such device as a burlesque proposal, it was obvious that nothing of the sort would escape detection by his sister, who was evidently in a determined and dangerous frame of mind. It must be fairly done—that was clear. But how? where? when? in what words? and with what results? He felt that he might put an acceptance out of the question; or, if so unlikely a thing were to happen, there would be plenty of time after its occurrence to consider the revolution in his life which would thereby be involved.

But the alternative? Refusal? The fact of being refused was only an essential episode in a drama which, from first to last, was horrible to contemplate; in itself, indeed, it was not half so bad as the act of proposal. For in Tom's soul there lingered certain sparks of chivalrous feeling; he had a strong regard and admiration for Esmè, and in his present rare mood of thoughtfulness, with the matter fairly before him—no longer vaguely and in the remote future—there did seem to him to be something very repulsive in the idea of mixing up this gentle and innocent lady with so coarse a transaction. Schooled, however, to repress his better emotions, and driven, as he felt, by necessity to the inevitable, he wrenched himself away as best he might from painful sentiment to practical considerations. The results of a refusal—what must they be? This reflection now occupied him, and a large portion of the afternoon was spent in considering how the catastrophe could in any way be brought to harmonize with his autumn plans—his shooting projects, and so forth.

His cogitations led him to no comfortable conclusion; and when he appeared at dinner, the total eclipse of his Yorick-like characteristics was patent to all, and dulled the tone of the whole party.

Mrs. Ravenhall observed it with lively satisfaction. "It wants point, however," she said to herself. "Why can't he look at Esmè? and, oh, if he *would* drink less of that champagne—it is so deplorably exhilarating!" On this latter head her anxieties were not realized. Tom's gloom and silence only seemed to deepen. Lord Ribston drew Esmè's attention to it. "There are no great 'events' on just now," he said, "or I should fancy Wyedale had come to grief again. As it is, I suppose he's only grudging the grouse their day of rest."

When the ladies left the drawing-room, Mrs. Ravenhall came up to her with great tragic eyes,

and said, in a tragic whisper, "Poor dear Tom! what a terrible state he is in! Do, pray, darling, try to find out what is the matter." Whereupon Esmè reported Lord Ribston's theory.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Ravenhall, "this is no laughing matter—no joke. I know the play of his features too well. His face frightens me. Take an opportunity, dear, and ask him what has happened. He will tell you anything, I am sure. Do—to oblige me."

When Tom made his appearance he still wore the same rueful aspect, and seated himself apart in the large drawing-room, resting his head mournfully upon his hand. And then, since there was no sort of reserve, but rather a frank *camaraderie*, between Esmè and him, she, in passing him as if by accident, stopped, and said, kindly, "I fear you have a bad headache, Mr. Wyedale."

"No," replied Tom, looking up without a smile—"no, I have no headache."

"What is the matter, then? You look very ill, as if you were in pain."

"I *am* in pain, but I am not ill; horribly unhappy, that's all."

"I am very sorry; but I am sure nothing very serious ever happens to you."

"Ah! but this is serious—vitally serious. I can't tell you about it now, but I will to-morrow or some other time."

"Tell your sister, Mr. Wyedale. She is very anxious about you."

"No, I certainly won't tell her. I'll tell you, if you'll listen to me. Will you, some other time?" And she, assenting, left him in yet deeper gloom, from the step which he had taken in the direction of the abyss.

Innocent Esmè was quite grieved for the heavy affliction of her cheery friend. "He confesses," she said to Mrs. Ravenhall, "that he is very unhappy, and wishes to tell me all about it. So, of course, I shall soon know; and, if he doesn't forbid it, I will tell you what he says."

"Thanks, darling! it will be *such* a relief! but please don't let him escape you. Find an opportunity as soon as possible. I will help you."

Having thus contrived to set the fowler and the prey mutually in quest of each other, Mrs. Ravenhall felt that she had made assurance doubly sure, and that it would be hard indeed if the desired opportunity did not at once occur. Next day, however, the "fowler," finding himself in better spirits, or at least able to take more philosophical views of what was impending, thought the inevitable moment might be advantageously postponed in favor of another day's shooting—his last, perhaps, at Dunerlacht—and went forth, accordingly, *malgré* his sister's remonstrances.

The day was fine, and he had a good many hours of something like enjoyment; but with the shades of evening the shadows fell again upon his spirit, so that his conduct at dinner and in the evening was, as Mrs. Ravenhall admitted to herself, "almost beautiful."

"No better! Even worse, I think!" she whispered to Esmè, shaking her head dolorously.

"Has he spoken to you?"

"There has been no opportunity as yet."

"Only twenty-four hours now!" muttered Tom to himself, as he went to bed. "Well, hang it!

it will be all over by this time to-morrow—that's one consolation," and so turned in, and slept the sleep which blesses the last hours of condemned criminals.

The inevitable day—the last twelve hours—came at last. Tom, chained by his pledge, had to reject all sporting temptations, and, in every sense, envied the sportsmen, as he wistfully beheld them disappear in the direction of the moor. His sister invited him to come to her room and receive certain hints as to his conduct in the impending trial; but he would none of this. "It would only confuse me and make me nervous," he said; "and, Heaven knows, I'm shaky enough already!"

Then he went and mooned about in the flower-garden, awaiting Esmè's arrival; for he knew that it was her habit to go there every morning after breakfast.

Tom could not be said to wait impatiently; but as Esmè had not made her appearance in the garden long after her usual hour, he left it, and strolled down the avenue in the direction of the bridge, with a languid intention of seeing whether anything was stirring in a certain salmon-pool of which he knew. Arrived at his destination, he began to peer into the water, which was clear, though deep, and somewhat troubled with back swirls from the main current. Presently his eye caught the outline of what seemed to be a noble "fish," fitfully visible in the depths, and, with the sportsman's instinct at once aroused, he set to work cautiously to get himself into a better position for observing it and estimating its proportions—an impulse with which keen lovers of the "gentle art" will perhaps sympathize. While thus earnestly employed, a voice from behind accosted him:

"What *are* you doing, Mr. Wyedale?"

"Hush! hush!" whispered Tom, holding up his hand; and though, on looking round, he beheld Esmè, the salmon retained the position of paramount interest.

"If you come here, very carefully," he continued, "you will see him to perfection."

Esmè went over to him very carefully. "What is it?" she said, adapting herself to the situation by also whispering.

"I'd almost stake my life he's a thirty-pounder; clean as a whistle, too. Look at him!"

"I can't see anything."

"Why, there, *there*—just over that yellow stone. Oh, Miss Douglas!"

These last words were uttered in a tone of bitterest reproach; for Esmè, in raising a hand to shade her eyes, caused some movement of her drapery which caught the mysteriously angled vision of the fish, and he was off like a flash of lightning.

"I am so sorry!" she said.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," replied Tom, magnanimously; "we couldn't have caught him, you know. Now, I wonder what *his* plans are! I *should* like to have a struggle with a fellow of that sort. He *must* be thirty pounds at least—probably more—perhaps thirty-five."

"Why don't you go and get a rod and try for it?"

"Oh, there would be no chance just now." And then it flashed upon Tom, still recumbent, that another kind of angling must occupy his immediate attention.

"I am going down to the lodge, to take these papers to the old people there, and I must make haste," said Esmè.

"I'll walk with you, if I may," said Tom, rising from his post of observation; and they started.

"Tremendous, great, fine fish that!" he remarked, after they had walked a few paces in silence.

"I wish I had seen him," said Esmè.

"Another time you must remember that fish see round the corner and hear with their tails."

"I don't think I shall forget *that*."

After this, Tom indulged in some reflections upon the caprices and general frowardness of the salmon tribe, speaking with a chastened vitality, though by no means languidly. When he had done, Esmè said, "I am glad to see you are better to-day, Mr. Wyedale."

"Thanks," said Tom, nervously; "but I am not better—I'm worse; I've been getting worse daily for some time past."

"I should never have detected it."

"No, no, I dare say not; but the strain of concealment has been very trying. You know what Viola says about concealment, and her damask cheek—or somebody else's damask cheek—and the worm i' the bud, and that?"

"Oh yes," said Esmè, with a painful inclination to laugh, repressed in honor of Tom's lugubrious expression; "but why should you conceal your troubles? You have a most sympathetic friend in your sister; and I am sure you can have nothing to be ashamed of."

"Ashamed!" cried Tom; "quite the reverse—I'm very proud of it."

"Proud of what, Mr. Wyedale?"

"It, you know, the—ahem!—the trouble."

"Indeed!" said Esmè, in deep bewilderment.

"Yes; and you know sisters are all very well in their way, but one can't confide everything to one's sister."

"No, no, of course not; but why not go to some gentleman-friend: Mr.—Mr. Glencairn, for instance, or my father? I am sure my father would be only too happy to help you with his advice."

"I am sure he would," said Tom, thinking of the kind of advice his lordship would be likely to give under the circumstances; "but I can't go to him in the first instance."

"Well, then, some one else. Pray do. We are all so sorry to see you dull and sad."

"Are *you* really sorry?" said Tom, halting.

"Mr. Wyedale! can you doubt it?"

"Oh no. I thought you mightn't be, you know—that was all," said Tom, becoming perfectly incoherent; and presently added, in the same vein, "And, indeed, I'd rather *you* weren't sorry."

"Mr. Wyedale!"

"I would rather you rejoiced in the whole transaction, you know—that's the honest truth."

"Transaction! I confess you fairly puzzle me."

"I dare say I do. I know I puzzle myself. I'm an imbecile, an idiot; but you won't mind that, will you?"

"What? that you are an imbecile?"

"No; that I'm talking up and down, and across, and round the corner. The fact is, I'm as nervous as the—as can be. Don't you see, I'm trying to tell you all about it?"

"No, Mr. Wyedale, I can't say I do. Do you mean about the—the trouble?"

"Certainly. You said you would listen to me, you know."

"And so I will, with pleasure."

"You're sure it won't bore you?"

"Oh, quite sure."

"Very well, then—ahem!—ahem!" Tom had again halted, and he now came to a dead pause in his speech. Esmè was obliged to turn away her head to conceal her mirth. The preposterous gloom of his face quite overpowered her. "The fact is," Tom stammered, at last, "a dreadful thing has happened."

"To you, Mr. Wyedale? to yourself?" cried Esmè.

"To me."

"Yes, but—but, pray what is it?"

"It is a kind of thing which fortunately happens, I believe, only once or so in a man's lifetime. That's the only consolation; though it leaves its mark on him, they say, from—the cradle to the grave."

"What *can* it be?"

"Well, to be perfectly frank with you, I have become a prey—a prey; I say—a victim—"

"Oh! to what, Mr. Wyedale? Please don't keep me in suspense."

"A victim, I repeat—of course, a willing victim; you clearly understand *that*?"

"Yes, now I do; but to what, or whom?"

"To emotions, Miss Douglas. I have conceived an aff— I have contracted, that is to say, an attach— I ang it! I'm in love! There! that's the long and short of the matter."

Esmè's eyes opened very wide.

"You, Mr. Wyedale—*you*!" was all she could gasp; and then the torrent of her mirth could no longer be pent in, and she laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. Tom regarded her in discomfited silence. When she had recovered a little, she said, "Can you ever forgive me? I am so ashamed, so sorry; but I could *not* help—" and then, catching another sight of her companion's woful visage, she had another relapse.

"I am sorry," said Tom, with sad dignity, "that you find an honest man's love so ridiculous."

"No, no, Mr. Wyedale; it is not so, I assure you. It was the way you spoke, and the way you looked, that upset my gravity. You made such a tragedy of it, I was quite frightened; and then, when you told me what 'the trouble' really was, it seemed all so—so different," said Esmè, with symptoms of another break-down.

"I suppose," said Tom, "it *is* ridiculous?"

"No, indeed! Why should it be so? But am I to know anything more?"

"Oh yes. I fear, however, that you will only laugh at me."

"No; I promise you I will not. May I ask who the—the lady is? I hope she is very nice."

"She is adorable."

"Do I know her?"

"Intimately."

"Really! Where is she—in Scotland?"

"Yes; she is in Glenerlacht."

"How very exciting! Why, you must mean one of the party at the castle?"

"Yes, certainly, and—"

"Let me guess. Not Miss Snapsley?"

"Very much the reverse; but listen—"

"Not possibly Miss Milkington?"

"You are sneering at me, Miss Douglas."

"No, no; I assure you not. Can it be Mrs. Crock?"

"Why don't you say Lady Bugles at once?"

"Please don't be offended."

"Miss Douglas!—ahem! Esmè, listen to me. I feel the madness—the presumption—the hopelessness of my love; but it will have utterance. For long months I have grappled with it—grappled, I say—like a man; but I am beaten now. I succumb. I throw up the sp—ahem! I love you, and I offer you my love. A poor man's love is a very poor offering; but it is all I have to give; and it is yours, if you will condescend to accept it."

Esmè stared at Tom in complete stupefaction, and said nothing.

"You hesitate!" cried Tom, with some perturbation; "at least, you hesitate! Oh, say I need not abandon all hope!"

"Mr. Wyedale," said Esmè, at last, "am I dreaming? Or is it possible that you are talking to me in sober earnest?"

"Nothing could be more solemn and sober. Be assured of that. All my—my peace of mind rests on your reply."

"I am distressed—I am infinitely distressed, Mr. Wyedale, to hear you say so—if you are serious. But surely—what can it mean?—surely I have done nothing to lead you to suppose that there was, or ever could be, anything between us but friendship?"

"No," said Tom, "that is perfectly true. I said that I was mad and presumptuous."

"And surely—it is most mysterious!—surely it cannot really be true that you have been—have been entertaining such feelings all the time you speak of? This must be some strange delusion."

"Not at all," said Tom, doggedly; "it is sadly and bitterly the truth."

"Then, Mr. Wyedale, I can only say that I am deeply distressed."

"You can give me no hope?"

"I am grieved to give you pain, and I don't require to tell you how warmly I regard your friendship; but I can accept nothing more than it."

The conviction that it was all over afforded unbounded relief to Tom; but he was greatly at a loss what to say next—how, in fact, to finish off the little drama, *selon les règles*. He remained silent, therefore, looking discreetly woe-begone, and waiting for an idea, or some further utterance on Esmè's part. They had turned—the visit to the lodge had been tacitly abandoned—and were now slowly walking back to the castle. A pretty long silence was at last broken by Esmè, who, looking at Tom's sad face, and thinking how bright it used always to be, said, with an impulse from her warm heart, "I am so sorry for what has happened, Mr. Wyedale. I can't tell you how truly I am grieved."

"Oh, please don't be distressed, Miss Douglas! It serves me right for my presumption; and besides, everything goes wrong with me; I never expect anything happy to come my way."

"Don't say so, Mr. Wyedale. I am sure you are generally very happy, and make others very happy too; and I am sure this little illusion will very soon pass away. I hope we are always to be friends—true friends?"

"Always, and with all my heart," said Tom, heartily.

Esmè held out her hand, which he took; and thus the friendly *entente* was sealed.

"You may be sure," she continued, "that I shall not breathe a hint of what has occurred to any one."

"Thanks; how good of you!"

"And I am sure no one in the house could suspect such a thing—you seem to have such a wonderful power of concealing your feelings—so that you need feel no embarrassment before the party."

"Oh, but, Miss Douglas, I must go away at once!"

"Go away?"

"Yes, to-day, or to-morrow at latest."

"Why, Mr. Wyedale?"

Tom was only too glad to find that there was any question about it. He had understood that his departure would be considered a matter of etiquette. "Why?" he repeated, rather at a loss for a reply; "oh! you know my—ahem!—my feelings would scarcely permit—"

"Now, Mr. Wyedale, we are friends, are we not?"

"Certainly."

"Then I beg you, as a friend, not to go away."

"I would do much to please you; but this is really—"

"No, I will take no refusal; you *must* stay."

She had now quite decided that Tom's declaration was the result of a sudden fancy which had sprung up in his spasmodic mind the day before yesterday, destined to evaporate the day after to-morrow, and which, though utterly undeserving of the honors of a *grande passion*, yet demanded, from her compassion, the healing balm of kindness and consolation during its brief existence.

"And you know," she added, "there is the great deer-hunt on Saturday. How could you go before that? It would look strange, so sudden a departure; it might cause remark."

"True," said Tom, as if this reflection had weight with him; "there is, certainly, a good deal of truth in that. I fear it might cause remark; but—"

"No, no, Mr. Wyedale, I will have no 'buts.' You will stay?"

"Well," said Tom, after some reflection, "I will try to discipline myself. I *will* remain till after the deer-drive, at whatever cost of personal suffering. Your wish shall always be my law."

"And this, I am sure, is for your good. I wish it, because I wish you not to suffer, but to enjoy yourself, which I hope and think you will."

Tom shook his head despondingly, but repeated, in the resigned tone of a martyr, that he would remain till after the drive. And now, having reached the house, they separated.

Tom felt that he was entirely master of the situation. His financial strain was relaxed; he had honestly fulfilled his pledge to his sister; he was done with her long importunities; his autumn plans were in the *status quo ante*; and not a soul but Esmè and his sister, neither of whom seemed to him to matter, was a bit the wiser. Peace and contentment steeped the spirit of the rejected suitor; and his only anxiety was for the ordering of his countenance, which he felt might be apt to betray the unseemly joy

raging within his breast. In this halcyon frame he sought his sister, who, seeing the brightness of his face, clapped her hands, and cried, "Victory!" Tom had the decency to sadden his face a little, as he replied, "No, Lucy, alas! not victory—a cropper."

"What is that? You don't mean that she has refused you?"

"Yes, I do; to her shame be it said."

"Why did she refuse you?"

"Why? I didn't press her on that point; but I presume it was due to some defect in her intellectual arrangements."

"And you joke about it?"

"I don't. I've had an awful time of it, I can tell you."

"You must have mismanaged matters somehow. This comes of your conceit and neglecting my hints."

"No, I managed it beautifully, and came off with flying colors."

"But without the lady, it would seem."

"Yes, but with all the moral results of a victory."

"Stuff! Well, there is ruin before you now."

"I hope not."

"Oh, but there is. You can never hope to have such chances again."

"Well, I couldn't abduct her forcibly, could I?"

"But you might have played your cards like a reasonable being."

"I have told you that I had my own scheme, which was to make a waiting race of it. If you chose to come and force my running, you have only yourself to blame for the catastrophe."

"I am utterly disgusted with you."

"I am sorry for that; but it is not an argument."

"Tell me *exactly* what took place. Remember, I shall get it all out of her."

"I'll tell you exactly; but you'll get nothing out of her—she is far too loyal and good."

Tom then told his story briefly; and when he had finished, she said,

"And when do you leave?"

"Leave? I'm not going to leave that I know of."

"How?"

"Because I am going to stay where I am."

"You mean this—gravely?"

"And most distinctly."

"You can't be so utterly callous and abominable!"

"Well, I have sufficient fortitude and manly dignity to enable me to protract my residence amidst what Lord Germistounne calls 'our unrivalled scenery.' That, perhaps, is a more graceful way of putting it."

"Wretch! you have no shame!"

"Shame implies a gallery; and there is none in this case."

"There is Miss Douglas."

"I stay at her special request."

"Oh, that would be a mere form, dictated by good-nature and a desire to let you down easily."

"Not a bit of it. In any case, I have yielded to her importunities. I really can refuse nothing to a woman, even to the woman who is 'red-hand' from refusing me, so I have pledged myself."

"And how, pray, do you expect me to look?"

"Well, I confess I had formed no theory on that subject. But I think, Lucy, you are quite old enough a soldier to look after yourself. Seriously, no one knows anything about the matter except Miss Douglas, and she need never know that you know anything about it; so how can you be compromised? See how unflinchingly I sacrifice my just susceptibilities to Miss Douglas's wish. Take an example from me, and sacrifice your own morbid *mauvaise honte* to your own convenience."

This so far silenced Mrs. Ravenhall, to whom a move at the moment would have been gravely inconvenient; but she wound up the session by assuring Tom that he was heartless, selfish, false, and maddeningly self-sufficient; also, that she now formally washed her hands of him forever.

"But you mustn't forget our compact, dear Lucy," said Tom, sweetly.

"What compact?"

"Touching that tiresome further sum of a thousand pounds, which will require to be forthcoming almost at once, I fear."

"I'm sorry I promised; but I'm not like you—I keep my engagements."

"I see you are embittered by my disaster. In a limited sense, that is perhaps to your credit; it shows heart, strong family feeling, and so on. But to turn and rend the poor sufferer himself argues a kind of feminine logic which a woman like you ought to despise."

"Go away, you hypocritical horse-leech!"

And this was the lame and impotent conclusion of all poor Mrs. Ravenhall's Machiavellian plots, sacrifices, and endurances.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FOR several days succeeding the events just related, Cosmo had to endure a total cessation of intercourse with the lady of his love. Once he had the courage to contrive a pretext and call at the castle; once, in a forlorn-hope, and sailing under the tourist's flag, he had revisited the ruins. But on the former occasion, his sole reward was the sight of Lady Bugles engaged in some mysterious process of imitative decoration at an upper window; and on the latter, when he had recrossed the river, half deafened and crazed by old Maggie's "entertainment," he had the gloomy satisfaction of beholding Esme, escorted by her father and Lord Ribston, arrive on the scene he had just abandoned. At church on Sunday, where he had hoped to see her, he found himself so placed in relation to the Dunerlacht pew, as to command a perfect view of the heads of Lord Germistounne, Lady Bugles, and Lord Ribston, all placidly swaying in a harmonious trio of slumber, but nothing else; and although at the conclusion of the diet he was rewarded by a little fluttering bow, smile, and blush—this last, by-the-by, was not quite a certainty—all these things constituted but meagre fare to appease the hunger of the heart withal. Cosmo was very feverish and restless, and but sorry company for Phil Denwick, who, though he consoled himself pretty well by unwearied devotion to the moor, marvelled greatly at the new indifference to sport displayed by his host, whose otherwise spasmodic ways of life also excited his attention,

and eventually his suspicion. And so it came about that, before long, Phil was intrusted with his friend's secret, and had to endure those terrible outpourings, and those circular maunderings, which Love, the leveller, extracts with equal hand from all his victims. It was hard upon Phil, but a great relief to Cosmo, when the latter had once unbent, for Phil was both sympathetic and sanguine, and, regarding his benefactor with a sort of hero-worship, invariably laughed to scorn the notion that his superlative merit could fail of recognition in any quarter whatsoever, including even Lord Germistoun.

"He may be prejudiced, you know, and that sort of thing; but, hang it! he isn't blind. Men like you don't grow on every hedge. Take a common-sense view of the matter. Remember that we live in the nineteenth century."

Thus Phil: and though Cosmo felt that, in reference to Lord Germistoun, the latter consideration had little virtue, still his friend's confidence assured him, and confirmed him—if, indeed, he required confirmation—in his policy of,

"Let the great river bear me to the sea."

This policy did not as yet go the length of leading him to direct and aggressive action. Hesitating and perplexed, he waited upon circumstances and the inspirations of impulse. With all his friend's sympathy and encouragement, these few days were days of torture and unrest; and it was in a tumult of delight that he received, on the Thursday evening, the following note:

"Dunerlacht Castle, Thursday.

"DEAR SIR,—A good many of our deer are stated to be obstinately harboring in the woods, and, for our stalking operations, it is expedient to dislodge them and send them to the forest. Moved by this consideration, and at the urgent request of my friend the Marquis de Saut du Loup, I am induced to decide upon having a deer-drive on Saturday. It is a form of sport which (viewed as sport) I distinctly disapprove of, but the above considerations prevail with me. Should it tally with your arrangements to join our party, we shall be glad to have your assistance, and that of any of your men whom you can spare for beating purposes. Ten o'clock is the hour decided upon, and the rendezvous will be at the cairn on the western shoulder of Dunerlacht, where the ladies propose to give us luncheon in the afternoon. Yours truly,

"GERMISTOUNE."

A similar missive arrived for Phil from the laboriously formal old gentleman; and it is needless to say that the invitation was joyfully accepted by both recipients.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Nor a cloud in the sky: the misty bloom of sunrise on the mountains: a voiceless breeze hovering over the landscape, and drawing from all its lurking-places the goodly fragrance of the hills: great stillness checkered by faint moorland harmonies, whispering of the heather, and silvery chiming of many unseen rivulets. Thus graciously did the eagerly wished-for day of the deer-drive

greet Cosmo, as he looked forth at the rising of the sun. Nature, as is her wont in our moods of stronger emotion, seemed to enter into communion with him and to offer him her sympathy, and he, as is the wont of the imaginative, drew presages from her aspects. Thus, though he had neither prospect nor scheme for the day in front of him, though he could foresee nothing, in the way of opportunity, which it might bring forth, he yet drew from this fair and solemn sunrise a presentiment, strong as conviction, that a grand turning-point in his destiny was about to be reached. Nor did he confront the prospect with agitation; for, as his eye ranged over the brightening hills, he seemed to read promise in their growing lustre; and from the far and clear horizon—the home of hope—hope's message seemed to come to him, in the balmy breath and murmuring music of the morning. And so, exalted rather than depressed by the sense of an impending crisis, he went forth, in good heart and hope, to the rendezvous on Dunerlacht.

When he and Phil Denwick arrived at the spot, they found a large company already assembled. It included all the gentlemen from the castle, besides several neighbors: nor was the fair sex unrepresented; for Lady Bugles, Mrs. Crock, and Miss Snapsley (in the secret hope of being permitted to share the vigil of some sportsman in his *cache*) had protested that they would not for worlds be absent from a gathering which promised to be so rich in picturesque elements. The collapse of Mrs. Ravenhall's schemes had so far restored her to herself that she was relieved from perpetual sentry duty, and being once more able to consult her own tastes, she did so by promptly emancipating herself from thralldom to "the picturesque" and other objects of her recent dramatic enthusiasm. Thus, though Esmè, in her quality of hostess, was present, the scene was not adorned by her hitherto inevitable guide, philosopher, and friend.

All but a week—it seemed a year to Cosmo—had elapsed since he had held speech with Esmè. If for him the interval had been a time of trial, for her it had, at all events, mitigated the painful feelings produced by the events of their last meeting. Thus, though she met him with some obvious agitation of manner, a sudden brightness which beamed in her face suggested, not so much embarrassment, as some happier emotion which she had not the power or the art instantly to conceal. Few words passed between them.

"I was beginning to think," said Cosmo, "that I was never going to see you again."

"Is it so long since we met?" replied Esmè, who was, after all, a daughter of Eve.

"To me it appears a century."

"I fear from that that your sport has not been good?"

"Oh, the sport! I was not thinking of *it*. I believe it has been good enough."

"And surely you cannot complain of the weather?"

"No, we can't complain of that; but bright weather can't do everything for us."

"Perhaps the birds have been wild?"

"No; I think not particularly wild."

A pause, during which Cosmo felt his presentiment fading.

"I wonder," continued Esmè, "if there are *really* many deer in the woods just now?"

"Ah, I wonder if there are?"

"Papa is very confident about it."

"Yes, he seemed to say so."

"Do you expect to kill many?"

"This kind of sport is always a lottery."

Here the dialogue was interrupted. What a sequel to a week of passionate reverie and transcendental dreams! What a lapse it seemed to show from the footing on which that horrible old woman had found them by the ruin! Such is love—seeming so far when it is so near, still feigning to retire when it is on the very threshold. But experience and philosophy are dumb on such occasions, and Cosmo felt discouraged and miserable.

The dialogue was interrupted by Lord Ribston. "The ladies," he said, "seem to wish to go through the whole entertainment. Lady Bugles has secured a place in the marquis's *cache*, provided all the other ladies agree to go. Now, what do you say, Miss Douglas? Will you honour me?"

"Thank you, Lord Ribston; I am sorry that I cannot."

"But why? If it is for some superstition about chaperonage, why not go with Lord Germistoun? Do be sociable! There are long intervals between the beats, and pleasant walks between them. Come, Miss Douglas! have pity on us. Don't deprive us of the light of your countenance."

"Thank you; but it is really impossible. If for no other reason, I have something else to do. I have to visit a poor old woman who is sick on the other side of the hill; but the other ladies are quite independent of me, of course."

"I never knew such a district as this is for sick old women!" cried Lord Ribston, impatiently. "Why can't the hags die at once and be done with it? And you are resolved?"

"Yes, indeed I am."

"Then I shall vote against all the others going. Their chattering would ruin our sport."

"Well," said Mrs. Crock, who now came up, "is it all arranged? Are we to go, Lord Ribston? Please don't say 'no,'" she added, winningly, as children coax and win.

"I have nothing to do with the arrangements," said the noble brute, gruffly.

"But you said you would arrange it."

"And I have not succeeded. There is only one arrangement I can answer for, and that is, that I am going to shoot by myself." And so saying, he went away, darkly sulking.

"Poor Lord Ribston! Something has vexed him. I am so sorry!" said Mrs. Crock, tenderly alive to the sorrows of a coronet, and thirty thousand pounds a year, still undisposed of.

"I can't say I share your compassion," said Esmé, with a good deal of warmth. "He behaves like a spoiled child, and is extremely rude."

Tom Wyedale was, of course, present to-day, and without a trace of affliction in his face or manner—very much, indeed, the contrary. He had found it impossible to support the part of a disconsolate lover with any sort of consistency; and after twenty-four hours of sorry acting, had abandoned the attempt with characteristic sang-froid. And now the pleasant reaction from financial pressure, and that other trouble which had temporarily disturbed him, was frankly evi-

denced by the more than ordinary exuberance of his gaiety.

The "picturesque" element upon which the ladies had vaguely reckoned was exclusively represented by the marquis, who was habited in a wonderful *jäger* costume, combining the more florid features of many eras and nationalities, and secured to his person by a multiplicity of straps, cords, and tassels, which would have done credit to the ingenuity of any age or country. In addition to various other warlike weapons, his equipment included a large-sized bugle-horn; and upon this, while the marquis was engaged in an animated conversation, Tom Wyedale surreptitiously blew a blast of terrific volume and dissonance, which awoke a thousand echoes of wood and hill. Lord Germistoun, who was "gouty," and occupied in haranguing his head-keeper on the duties of the day, turned with an angry start. "What is that?" he cried. "Who did that?" Tom had dropped the bugle, and was demurely examining the lock of his rifle. "Who has got that infernal instrument?" continued his lordship.

"The marquis," said Tom, "has got no end of infernal machines tied to his body. I shouldn't wonder if one of them had gone off."

"Il est à vous, M. le Marquis?" cried Lord Germistoun, "vous avez un cor de chasse?"

"Mais, oui, M. Milor, naturellement—à la chasse, comme à la chasse."

"Et vous l'avez sonné?"

"Non, non! Pas du tout. Ce diable de Tom Wyedale qui est si plein de méchanceté—"

"Wyedale, I am surprised! I consider that you have been guilty of—"

"My dear Lord Germistoun, I only wanted to see, in the interests of us all, whether the horn was real or a dummy. I felt that if it were real, any hope of sport might be abandoned. The marquis is not the man to have a thing of the sort handy without using it. I do think he ought, so far, to be disarmed."

"M. le Marquis," said Lord Germistoun, "le cor est absolument défendu!"

"Comment, monsieur?"

"Défendu—absolument."

"Mais, monsieur, il faut bien faire sortir les cerfs, n'est ce pas?"

"Non! non! non! Donnez le moi, je vous en prie, monsieur."

After some discussion, the marquis reluctantly surrendered the bugle.

"Here!" cried his lordship, "some of you men take it away."

"I'll tak 't, my lord," said old Davidson, who was present to assist in posting the guns.

"Dod!" he exclaimed, after bearing it off and curiously inspecting it, "what'll he be for bringing neist? A drum, maybe! or a pie-annie—wha kens?" and then added, as he stowed it away in his game-bag, "There! it'll no disturb us noo, onyway."

This high-handed act of confiscation being completed, Lord Germistoun gave them all a lecture on the necessity of silence and circumspection, when posted.

"Our deer," he said, "are singularly acute and suspicious. I have also to request that hinds may be considered sacred; and let me add that roe-deer are not our object to-day, and ought not to be fired at."

"Vous comprenez, M. le Marquis? Point de biche? point de chevreuil?"

"Parfaitement, M. Milor," replied the marquis, who, however, approached the day's sport with misty views as to sex and species, and with perfectly catholic intentions as to the use of his weapons.

"It is now time, I think, to get into our positions," said his lordship. "Adieu, ladies! *Au revoir* at luncheon."

The party then started, under the leadership of Innes, the Dunerlacht keeper, with Mr. Davidson for his coadjutor. Lady Bugles, with some audacity, accompanied them, attaching herself to the marquis, whom she had victimized, as she hoped, for the day, and who brought up the rear of the column. This latter circumstance caused her presence with the party to be unobserved for some little time; but it was at length detected by Lord Ribston, who promptly reported it to his host.

"Surely," he said, "that old woman is not coming with us?"

"What old woman?" cried the old lord, hastily, and stopping.

"Lady Bugles. There she is with the marquis—just behind Wyedale."

"Oh, this is contrary to all rule—distinctly preposterous! I must give her her *congé* at once."

Accordingly, when she came up, his lordship said: "I think, Lady Bugles, it will be more prudent if you return now. Our path becomes intricate, and you will find it difficult to make your way back alone."

"Oh, but I did not mean to go back! The marquis kindly insists on my accompanying him on his post."

"It distresses me to thwart you, and disappoint the marquis. But this is against our rules. Ladies *never* accompany the guns in our drives. Conversation would be inevitable, and our deer are remarkably wary and sensitive."

"I shall promise not to open my lips, Lord Germistoun."

"It distresses me to be inexorable; but even were you silent, your dress would hardly fail to attract the deer's attention." His eye rested on her head-gear, which, roughly speaking, consisted of a huge bird-of-paradise posed on her ladyship's head in the attitude of earnest incubation. "I fear," he continued, "that we cannot relax our rule. To do so would create a precedent. I fear we must positively say, '*Au revoir*!'"

There was no resisting this, and Lady Bugles sorrowfully withdrew, to the unfeigned delight of the marquis, who, watching the tail of the bird-of-paradise as it flashed like a thing of glory in its retreat through the woods, murmured to Tom Wyedale, with his face wreathed in grins—

"L'amour s'en va,
Cahin-caha."

They had a considerable walk, as the scheme was to take the most distant beat first, and work, in a sense, homeward. This involved an ascent of the hill till they were clear of the woods, when they passed along the lower edge of the deer-forest to the upper extremity of three successive and parallel glens, up which the deer were to be driven to the open hill. The formation of the ground was remarkable, and lent itself to the sport of the

day. The three glens—probably the beds of glaciers in the old world, as their dividing ridges would be the remnants of moraines—were deeply wooded, and formed connecting avenues, as it were, between the treeless forest and the woods which, to the extent of two or three thousand acres, covered the vale below. The divisions, of which the glens were the centre, on the mountain-side, were prolonged into the valley, either naturally or by clearance; so that the woods were pretty equally divided into three sections, each with its corresponding glen, and each separated from its neighbors by wide glades. Thus, there was a fair chance that, in a well-conducted drive, each beat might, to some extent, be productive.

When they reached the top of the farthest glen, the keepers, Innes and Davidson, at once assumed the air of conspirators, speaking in breathless whispers, moving with cat-like stealth, and repressing any untoward sound by gestures, silent but peremptory. Here the marquis gave much trouble.

"Enfin! cela va commencer!" he cried aloud, and rubbing his hands.

"Whisht, sir! whisht!" whispered Innes.

The marquis then whistled, which was similarly rebuked; and then lighted a cigar from a vesuvian, which went off with a report like a pistol's; whereupon the keeper came softly up to him, and, to his great astonishment, quietly took away the cigar, and placed it on an adjacent rock, murmuring that it might be reclaimed by the owner at the end of the drive. He then whispered a few terse rules of conduct to be observed by the marquis:

"You will not taak; you must not smock; you will not whistle anny; and, if you should have ockeshun to blaw your nawse, it will not do to be blawin' it into this glens till aal is over."

"Que diable! qu'est ce qui'l vent dire?" cried the marquis; but he was met on all sides with—"Whisht! whisht! whisht! Hush! hush! hush!" accompanied by looks of warning and rebuke.

"Ce sont de vrais fous!" he muttered, "feesht! feesht! feesht!—foosh! foosh! foosh! Bah! on dirait que ce sont de canards enrhumés."

Then the head-keeper, after posting Lord Germistoun and Captain Berkeley in ambush in the open, took with him six of the party, handing over the remainder to Davidson, and then each leader started with his following in single file, down opposite sides of the glen, to the various *caches*, or places of ambush, previously prepared, and echeloned with all engineering skill, so as to guard against accident. Presently Lord Germistoun beheld the head-keeper's division stealthily returning; and Innes himself, halting the remainder at the edge of the wood, emerged on to the open with the marquis, and advancing to the post of Captain Berkeley, removed that gentleman, without comment, and in his place left the marquis, to the ever-increasing bewilderment of the latter. The subsequent explanation to Lord Germistoun was perfectly simple—"He was offerin' to fire at a rinnin' rabbit in the wood, wi' his rifle and a', so I brocht him back to where he would not be able to do sae mickle misscheef."

The party again disappeared into the woods, over which the deepest silence reigned for the next half-hour. At last, from the far distance,

a faint halloo came; and then another and another, and many others, rapidly multiplying and waxing in strength. Stealthy rustlings, patterings of hesitating feet and hoofs, with pauses and recurrences; crackling of branches, sounds of quick-drawn breath. Such phenomena soon began to stir the pulses of the sportsmen on the lower posts, and, in obedience to them, many a barrel was levelled in the improvised loop-holes—only to be withdrawn—as a mountain-hare went warily by, or a troop of roe-deer trotted up and halted to listen, and trotted on again, offering temptations hard to resist.

The blended shouts of the beaters kept swelling in melodious volume, broken every now and then into short, sharp cries, as some beast of the forest was viewed; but as yet no shot was fired. The tide of sound rolled up the glen. At last individual tones and words were distinguishable, mingled with the crisp rattling of the beaters' sticks against stem and branch. The end was approaching, and not a shot fired!

Suddenly a terrific uproar arose all along the line. If lions and tigers had been careering in swarms about the woods, the agitation of the voices could not have been more frantic. There was no doubt as to its meaning. The true quarry had been raised at last, and the beaters, bent on driving it into the fatal defile, were guarding against any attempt which it might make to break back or to right or left. Presently, on a clear space, just below the entrance of the pass, a noble stag emerged and paused irresolute, with head erect and heaving flanks; then, urged by a closer shout, sprung forward across the open, and plunged into the shadows of the glen beyond.

A flash! a sharp report! But Lord Ribston's aim had not been true. The stag bounded into the air, and then, though it carried away a heavy wound in the haunch, rushed madly on, crashing through the coppice, wild with terror and pain. Another report! and, this time untouched, but with ever-increasing speed, the stag dashed on. And now the top of the defile was all but reached, and the free air of the open forest began to promise refreshment, and the rocks and heather of the longed-for sanctuary were before the eyes of the fugitive. One more bound, and it was clear of the treacherous glen, and, with new vigor, sped toward the mountain, where hope lay. But though it had escaped the wood, perils followed after. Ambushed on its upper verge, so as to command the open, Tom Wyedale, warned by the sounds which had reached him, sat, cool and alert, expecting his opportunity. Without haste or flurry, he raised his rifle as the stag swept past him, half hidden by the trees, and, without ceasing to cover it, waited till the doomed animal had emerged to some distance on the moor. Then he fired, and with a mighty leap into the air, the noble beast lay, prostrate and quivering, in the heather. Tom gave one quick glance at his victim, and then quietly proceeded to reload.

In no such stoical spirit was the incident observed by the Marquis de Saut du Loup, from his coigne of vantage up above. Breathless with excitement, he beheld the deer break cover; his rifle went up to his shoulders on the instant, nor is it doubtful that, had not Tom forestalled him, he would have at once drawn trigger, regardless that a swarm of beaters, not to mention several posted guns, were in the direct line of his fire.

When the animal fell, he jumped out of his *cache*, and was rushing down to inspect it; but some peremptory signals from Lord Germistounne, who was posted within sight, caught his eye, and sent him back to his ambush. Not, however, for very long. For suddenly the stricken stag, albeit in the death-agony, struggled to its feet, and, with lowered head and tottering limbs, again began to stagger up the hill. This was too much for the marquis. He was out like a flash of lightning, and, tearing down the hill, met the poor beast as it was about to fall for the last time. Before that event took place, however, the marquis, reserving his fire till within a yard of his mark, let off both barrels simultaneously into the flank of the deer, producing a breach of half a foot or so in diameter. The victim fell stone-dead; and the slaughterer, in the absence of the bugle, upon which he would now have sounded the *mort*, broke into jubilant cheers, waving his hat, and dancing round the carcass in child-like glee. A sudden thought then seemed to take him, and, drawing his *couteau de chasse*, he knelt down, and with that weapon, and a small saw which formed part of his mysterious armament, proceeded to decapitate the deer. This done, he bore the head off in triumph to his ambush, on reaching which, he turned in the direction of Lord Germistounne's post, and, with another cheer, held up the trophy for his host's admiration. His lordship acknowledged the compliment by shaking his fist very ferociously at the marquis, who, doomed to perpetual surprise and bewilderment, subsided into his lair, muttering,

"Maintenant je prétends que M. Milor est jaloux! Peste! j'en suis content. Ho! ho! le vieux grognard est diantrement jaloux! Ho! ho!"

Presently the keepers, after passing up the defile, and collecting the posted guns, made their appearance with them in the open.

"There will be something done to you, I'm thinkin', Mr. Wyedale?" said Innes.

"Something!" cried Tom, who, imperturbably easy in ordinary matters, was now white with indignation. "Something!—there *was* as fine a stag as you would wish to see; but that confounded Frenchman has blown it to atoms, and hacked it to pieces with saws, and pickaxes, and all sorts of devilish things. There! look at it!"

Indeed, what between Lord Ribston's contribution and the crater-like breach effected by the marquis, it was a lamentable spectacle. Innes held up his hands; speech altogether failed him.

"Dod!" said Davidson, who, having no deer in his own diocese, took a non-sporting view of the business—"Dod! I ne'er saw meat sae notawriously abaised—I *wull* say that."

The marquis, breathless with excitement, and brandishing the stag's head, now ran up to the party, as they stood in horrified inquest over the mangled remains.

"C'est moi qui ai tué la bête fauve! Moi! Saut du Loup!" he cried. "Voici la tête! la voici! la voici! Hoorah!" Instead of the congratulations he had anticipated, he was met with a reproachful silence. "Diantre! est ce qu'ils sont tous fous et tous jaloux?" he thought, in much discomfiture.

Lord Germistounne came slowly up, in a state of fearful dignity. He could not trust himself to address the marquis directly.

"Innes," he said, "you will see that this object is buried in the afternoon; and take that head now, and throw it into—into perdition. We must try to forget this abominable occurrence. Gentlemen, let us now go to the next beat." Then he moved gloomily off; but, before the next beat began, gave private directions to Innes to post the marquis (who only relinquished the *corpus delicti* after a stout resistance) where there was some reasonable prospect that human life, at least, would not be sacrificed. "I am a courageous man," he said, "but I shall not soon forget what even I have endured for the last hour in that person's neighborhood."

When Lord Germistoun alluded to a marquis of the *ancienne noblesse* as a person, and to an underling, it may be gathered that his sufferings had been indeed poignant. On the next beat, the marquis was accordingly posted by himself, and pretty far out in the open, where, from the nature of things, temptation was not likely to present itself. But here, no longer under his host's supervision, he whiled the tedium of his vigil by indulging in all the relaxations forbidden by Innes, besides keeping up a dropping fire with his rifle at such crows and hares as happened to pass within half a mile or so of his post. Thus, though no large game came his way, he amused himself very fairly; and, indeed, the recollection of the *bête fauve* which he had annihilated would have made *ennui* in any case impossible. This drive was more productive than the previous one: Tom Wyedale was again successful, while Lord Germistoun himself killed a stag; and these two angry sportsmen being thus partially appeased, the third and last drive was approached under happier auspices.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE scene of their final operations was in the glen nearest to Dunerlacht. Cosmo, who had as yet had no sport, was well posted toward its upper extremity, commanding an open ride leading to the moor. Little heart or interest had he in the day's sport. The few words he had exchanged with Esmè had damped him by their indifference; and, self-tormenting, the burden of his thoughts was all the morning this—that the week of their separation had obliterated the first traces of a warmer interest in him, which he had begun to dare to hope were discernible in her. Some one, perhaps, had been making mischief; and who more likely than Mrs. Ravenhall, with her obvious designs? Or some one, perhaps, had been successfully using his opportunities. Lord Ribston had possibly abandoned his nonchalant method of love-making, and, with devotion and earnestness aiding his overwhelming advantages, might now be winning the place which he himself had manifestly forfeited. Women were fickle, and never more liable to change than during the period of dawning partiality. Cosmo, thus sadly musing, was little affected by the din of the beaters, the rush and crashing of invisible deer, the crack of rifles, the silences, so full of mystery and suspense, and all the other incidents and phases of sylvan venery.

The range of woods to be beaten, this time, was considerably more extensive than on either of

the previous occasions; and the delay between the posting of the guns and the audible approach of the beaters was proportionately long. But the interval was not devoid of excitement; for the marquis, at last posted within the woods, and emboldened by recent immunity, carried on his guerilla practices, and kept such animals as chanced to be harboring in the upper glen in a state of continued restlessness. More than once had Cosmo been roused from his meditations by the near approach of promising sounds; and at last, and not very long after he had been posted, several roe-deer (the embargo on which had, this time, been removed) came dashing down toward him from the opposite side of the ride. Cosmo brought his gun to his shoulder. Suddenly the roe halted, then, wheeling about, galloped back; and he, following the troop with his barrels, withheld his fire till the deer he had singled out should reach a certain clear space in the wood. It was just gaining this spot, and his finger was closing on the trigger, when, with a loud cry of horror, he lowered his weapon. Good reason had he for his agitation. Across the line of his vision, as he was about to fire, passed the fair girl for whom he would have given his own life a hundred times. Esmè, moving down the ride, unconscious of danger, was watching the roe-deer as they fled up the opposite bank; and, at Cosmo's wild exclamation, she started violently and looked round. His gun was lowered, so she knew not of the escape which she had just made; and when Cosmo ran down to her, in speechless agitation, she merely made a hurried apology for disturbing the game. "I thought," she said, "that this glen had been beaten first, and that I could do no mischief by coming back from the cottages through the wood. I will go back now as quickly as I can," and she turned to go. Cosmo's voice shook so that he could not speak, but he took her hand and detained her. Esmè looked up in amazement.

"What is wrong, Mr. Glencairn?" she said.

"Danger!" muttered Cosmo; "you must not go."

"Oh, but I must indeed."

Cosmo said nothing; for all his answer he led her back to his own ambush.

Silently, and almost mechanically, he spread his plaid on the ground for her, his hands trembling violently all the while; for, indeed, as he realized the narrowness of her escape, and the awfulness of the tragedy which had all but befallen both, his agitation became more and more irrepressible. When he had arranged a sheltered seat for her, he turned and motioned her to it. She was startled by the wild look in his eyes, and the ghastly pallor of his face, on which the cold drops stood, and the tremor which seemed to shake his frame like an ague.

"Mr. Glencairn!" she cried, in alarm, "has there been an accident? Have you been hurt? You look dreadfully ill. Do say what has happened." He sunk down beside her, covering his face with his hands; but he said nothing, and, for long, the silence was only broken by the sound of his deep and troubled breathing.

"Can I do nothing for you?" said Esmè, at last.

Cosmo looked up, but did not answer.

"Are you better now?" she continued, anxiously.

"It is no bodily illness," he replied.

"What, then?"

"It is horror."

"Mr. Glencairn!"

Then Cosmo's voice came back to him, and he broke forth in rapid utterance: "You have escaped a deadly peril—you do not know how narrowly; if you had gone on, the danger would have been repeated. You have escaped death by a hair-breadth—and by my hand. I, too, have escaped death; for how could I have lived if you had died? I thank God for his mercy. He has saved you and delivered me."

"I do not understand. Something must have happened which I know nothing of."

"My gun was raised, the trigger was all but drawn, as you were passing. If it had been drawn, your life must have been sacrificed. Do you wonder now at my agitation?"

It was natural that Esmè, who had not actually seen the danger, and who, moreover, was of no weak and hysterical nature, should be much less affected by Cosmo's statement than was he by the event in which he had been the main actor. And so, though she looked very grave, she betrayed no agitation, and only said, in a low voice, "I am thankful for my preservation." Then, after a pause, she continued, "But now that the danger is past, pray do not be so distressed, Mr. Glencairn. Whatever had happened, it would have been by no fault of yours. I myself would have been alone to blame."

"Ah! fault! blame!—I do not speak of that," cried Cosmo, wildly. "In a supreme calamity we think of it, not of its cause. 'There is bitterness which nothing can add to.'"

"Do be calm, Mr. Glencairn. Mercifully, no calamity has happened. I am sure we are both devoutly thankful to God for that; and now there is no cause for distress, but altogether the reverse."

For a long time Cosmo sat silent, his agitation slowly subsiding, and the color gradually returning to his cheek. At last he looked up at Esmè with eyes that were calm, and even solemn. And as she met his gaze, the scene by the ruin flashed into her mind, and with it all the emotions—so strange, and yet so sweet—of that strange meeting; and she seemed to know, before they were spoken, the very words that he now would speak, and the very tones in which they would be uttered. The intervening time faded away, and his words seemed to her the immediate continuation of his last sentence, spoken many days ago. They came back to her like the phrases of a well-known song which had been interrupted for a moment in the singing, and now went on, in a foreseen sequence, to a conclusion which she seemed to know by heart. Cosmo did not immediately speak, but held her with his rapt eyes, so that she could not break the spell by word or movement—yielding herself to it as to the force of a mighty stream which glides, calm but irresistible, to the inevitable ocean.

At last he spoke. All the deep music had come back to his voice, and all its firmness, save when, now and then, it died in a pathetic cadence, or thrilled for an instant, following, with sensitive inflections, the tumult or pathos of his thoughts.

"I told you," he said, as if to him also it seemed that their last interview had been only for a moment suspended—"I told you that I

would seek distinction, and the social advantage which it gives; I said that I would seek it, not for the mere sake of that advantage—which would be a paltry ambition—but as a means to an end; I told you that, if I failed to reach that end, my life would be paralyzed. You remember that I said all this?" Esmè's lips parted, but no sound came from them. Cosmo continued: "A few terrible moments, here, in this wood, have shown to me, not how true these words were, but how poorly they expressed the truth. Language cannot tell the measure of what is immeasurable even by thought—and these poor words tried to express the measure of a devotion which has not any limit at all."

Cosmo paused for a little: thus far he had spoken as if strongly controlling himself; but when he resumed, his words came forth with far more fervid utterance, as though the energy of his emotion had swept away some barrier by which he had sought to restrain it.

"But I will not speak in enigmas. I feel that I now stand on the threshold of my fate, having come to this, through many conflicts and confusions. I have tried to listen, all my life, to the voice of duty; but at last that oracle has failed me, and now it is dumb. I have listened to the voice of prudence, but I cannot hear its words now; they are drowned in an overwhelming music, and with them all the whispers of my own unworthiness. That music has filled all my life, till it has become my life; and as I breathe the breath of life, I cannot choose but utter it. You are its key-note, and its theme is the love which I now offer you."

He ceased, but Esmè spoke not a word. Lights and shadows of color and expression passed in swift changes over her beautiful face, and her breath came faster, as Cosmo's glowing utterances rushed on to their climax; but she did not turn away. Only when his last words were spoken, a dewy lustre came into her eyes, and the strength of her emotion was confessed in one long, tremulous inspiration. Cosmo continued:

"I offer you my love, and I offer you my life: the one has no bounds, the other is little; but if you take the first, you will help me to make the second better and greater." He took her unresisting hand, and added, "Esmè, dearest Esmè! that is my offering. Will you take it, and trust me to make it not worthy—for that is impossible—but less unworthy of you, which, God helping me, I will try to do?" He gazed at her, as though his life depended on her answer; but she did not speak. "Tell me! tell me!" he cried; "do not keep me in this cruel suspense. Has my dream been too wild—the dream which has haunted me, day and night, since first I saw you?" But still she was silent. "Alas!" cried Cosmo, "you cannot love me. I am lost!"

Then Esmè's eyes drooped, and she murmured at last, "Nay, if my poor love can save you, you are not lost."

"Oh, Esmè! Esmè! I left the paradise of dreams to meet my fate; I meet the angel of my life, and find a paradise transcending dreams."

* * * * *

"Forever?"

"Yes! forever and forever!"

* * * * *

Linked hand-in-hand, eloquent with the wordless eloquence of happy souls—it was thus that

these lovers, of knightly purity and true guileless maidenhood, meetly plighted troth. Care stood aloof, and the hard world: all their world was here, here in the quiet glen, where, suddenly, the stillness seemed to deepen into a more golden silence, and the sunbeams seemed to flow through the voiceless quivering of the leaves, in streams of tenderer light; here, where from love's presence-chamber Nature hushed back the world's untoward cares, with all rude sound and movement, so that the very breath of their own last utterance seemed to hang fondly in the air about them, as its music lingered in their hearts—"Forever?" "Yes! forever!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ALAS that such rare moments should fly so fleetly! Soon "the voices of without" invaded their sanctuary. Growing from faint and distant echoes, the clamor of the hunt rolled upward from the valley; and as it swelled upon their ears, the ethereal walls which fenced them from the grosser earth dissolved, and cares, and doubts, and tremors entered in.

Cosmo was the first to break a long silence.

"We shall now have but a short time together," he said; "and, alas! dearest, we must face what really lies before us. Even from the midst of my great happiness anxious doubts rise. To your love I do not seem unworthy; but your father—how will *he* receive me as his daughter's suitor?"

After a short silence, Esmè replied: "There can be no reserve between us now; and I fear we must not expect him to be very favorable at first. But he will soon be reconciled, when he knows you better—and even for my sake, I know he will."

"I suspect he has a very strong dislike to me."

"Do not say that. He has his prejudices, but they would not influence him in such serious matters. He is too just for that; and when he knows you better, he will both like and admire you. Every one must; who could help it?"

Cosmo smiled at her sweet enthusiasm, and said,

"If it were only his personal dislike, he might, perhaps, get over that; but I fear that he will find a more serious objection in my birth."

Again Esmè paused for a little, and said:

"No, that would not be just; and I have never found papa unjust in large matters. That would not be held an objection in society in general, and why should there be an exception in my case?"

"Ah, my beloved! you are an exception to all the world. No one is worthy of you; and be sure that your father will not look lightly on the defects of any one who pretends to such a prize. It is natural and reasonable that he should not."

"But if I see no defects, and the world would see none, papa will not be so unjust as to insist upon them. I know he will not. You cannot know how good and tender he has been to me. Do not look so anxious. All that we shall require is a little patience. And you must remember, dear, that he is very old, and has infirmities, as we all have, and that his temper is quick, and that he often says things in an exaggerated way

which he only half means. You will remember this, and be forbearing with him, if he is harsh and unpleasant; will you not, dearest, for my sake?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"I know that it may be very, very trying; but if you will only bear it quietly for a little, I think that all will be well. I am certain that it will."

"When shall I speak to Lord Germistoun?"

"It will scarcely be possible to-day, I suppose?"

"Oh, pray let me speak to him first!"

"My darling, that is impossible! Consider the position it would place me in. It would look so unmanly. It would increase all his prejudices, and I do think it would justify them."

"I know you must be right; but I have never had any concealments from my father, and I think he might expect to hear of this first of all from me."

"Believe me that I *am* right here; and, besides, your concealment shall be of the shortest duration. I shall go to-morrow to the castle and see Lord Germistoun. It is Sunday, by-the-bye, but I shall walk over after church. I suppose I may?"

"Oh, please, please do! And now, dear, look happier, and be confident, like me. Is it likely or reasonable that all should not go well?"

"Happier, my own!" he cried; "how could I be happier? And, with you to win, what are obstacles? Who would not be confident, even if all reason and probability were against him?"

Five minutes more of bliss, during which the din of the beaters rose to its loudest climax, and then died away, close beside the lovers, in isolated cries of the zealous who beat to the last bush. Then the keeper, whose duty it was to recall the sportsmen from their posts, made his appearance, and informed them that all was over, and in another minute they found themselves approaching the main body of the party, who were waiting in the open.

The circumstances which caused Esmè's presence there, agitating though they had been, had passed from the minds of the lovers, and the peculiarity of their situation only occurred to them as they met the looks of surprise and inquiry which greeted their arrival. Fortunately, their actual arrival was not observed by Lord Germistoun, who was talking to some one, and looking another way; but, turning presently, and finding that Esmè had joined the party, he gave an exclamation of astonishment and displeasure.

"How now! what escapade is this?" he cried. "How do you find yourself here, Esmè? How do you presume to disregard my rules?"

"By a pure accident, papa. I ventured to return by this glen, because I thought it had been beaten in the first drive, and that I could do no harm; and I suddenly found myself among the guns, and was obliged to remain in shelter until now. That is the explanation of the mystery."

"Mystery! You ought never to be in the woods at all when there is any kind of shooting going on. I have told you so a hundred times; it is most dangerous: and how, pray, could you tell that your shelter was a safe one?"

Here Cosmo stepped forward and replied for her.

"Fortunately," he said, "Miss Douglas came

past my post, and, as she was evidently in a dangerous position, I persuaded her to go no farther."

"And she remained with you, on your post, during the drive?"

"I had no alternative but to beg that she would do so. Knowing the danger as I did, I took the responsibility of even insisting that she should remain."

"You exercised a wise discretion, sir, and I thank you. As for you, Esmè, you see what your reckless disregard of my wishes has brought about. You have incurred risk; you have probably interfered with the success of the drive; you have undoubtedly destroyed Mr. Glencairn's sport, and put him to grave inconvenience. You owe him an apology. Your conduct has been distinctly and altogether unpardonable."

The blood flushed in Cosmo's face, and he seemed about to speak, but a little imploring glance from her gentle eyes silenced him; and as she was far too well used to such ebullitions to make any reply, the storm soon growled itself out.

When all were mustered, the party started for the luncheon rendezvous. The marquis, however, retaining Tom Wydale (now appeased) as his interpreter, lingered behind to covenant with Innes for the clandestine recovery of the stag's head from the "perdition" to which the old lord's peevish temper had consigned it—an arrangement which was concluded, for the modest consideration of five pounds, to the great glee of the noble sportsman.

"De l'argent! de l'argent! de l'argent!" he cried. "Voilà la vraie chanson nationale de l'Angleterre. N'importe! J'ai racheté ma renommée à bon marché."

"Comment, mon cher marquis! votre renommée?"

"Mais oui! décidément. La bête fauve est à moi. Je l'ai tuée."

"Sa tête est à vous, sa mort pourtant est à mon fusil."

"Oh! là! là! qu'il s'obstine ce cher Torm! J'ai abattu cette diablesse de bête fauve—je l'ai abimée. Tout le monde en était témoin."

"Enfin nous sommes d'accord; il n'en reste que quelques lambeaux."

"Bien?"

"Bien nous sommes d'accord."

The marquis's susceptibilities being thus tranquillized, he strode proudly forward, decorated with various trophies of the chase—among which, in striking evidence of the versatility of his rifle, the dead body of an owl and the head of a bare hung from his girdle.

They found all the ladies awaiting their return, and the luncheon duly spread. Esmè's non-appearance had caused considerable speculation; and when the history of her adventure came to be known, some bitterness against Fortune rangled in the hearts of Lady Bugles and the other ladies. Why had *they* not also gone on errands of mercy, and lost their way, and been carried off captive to the *caches* of the eligible? It was very hard upon them! Mrs. Ravenhall, on the other hand, when she heard the story, set herself to watch the demeanor of the lovers, and soon drew her conclusions therefrom; nor is it too much to say of this acute lady that, before luncheon was over, she was as fully possessed of their secret as though it had been formally confided to her. No

one who does justice to the character of Mrs. Ravenhall as a finished worldling will suspect her of active spite, where no personal object was to be gained by it. At the same time, she could scarcely be expected to contemplate this evolution of Love's young dream with the amiable rapture of an idyllic poet. And, indeed, it was with a certain cynical pleasure that she looked forward to the *éclaircissement*, feeling assured that Lord Germistoun's grand unsuspectingness of Cosmo's intentions would, when they came to be confessed, heat the furnace of his wrath sevenfold.

"Another time," she thought, "he will perhaps attend to the hints of people who have eyes, and use them."

The luncheon-party was a very merry one—merrier even than that similar festival on the opening day of grouse—for the only element of gloom which it had contained was now eliminated. Then, Cosmo had been bewildered and wretched; but now, in the reaction from long suspense, in the ecstasy of new-born happiness, his habitual reserve deserted him, and he was lively and even gay. Honest Phil observed this, and was of good cheer, divining what it must portend; and Esmè, who sat opposite her lover, stealing many a glance at his radiant face, said, in her grateful heart, "What joy! what joy! It is I who have made him happy!"

When Lord Ribston had fed himself in seclusion, he came and sprawled by Esmè, and paid his court to her in the courtly fashion of these times. Cosmo beheld him with serenity, even with mirth. Over the empty head of this "oiled and curled Assyrian bull," messages of heavenly import flashed to him through the air, which brightened as they passed. What was Ribston to him? Ribston, forsooth! Let him lie and sprawl there in the fool's paradise of his fruitless prestige and unavailing knickerbockers!

Tom and the marquis were at the top of their bent, and many a change was rung on the *bête fauve* of unhappy memory. Tom proposed the marquis's health in a speech which traced the history of explosive agents till it culminated in the marquis himself, whom he characterized as "a mighty human torpedo;" and the marquis "carried a toast" in honor of his friend "Torm," whose petty jealousy he handled with great severity, and was entering upon what he called "a categorical memorandum" of the stag incident, when Lord Germistoun, who had not yet got over the "abominable occurrence," interrupted him with great promptitude.

The gillies and beaters were regaled with an extra ration of whiskey in honor of the three stags which had fallen (not including the *bête fauve* condemned to a nameless grave); and the pipers played and the men danced, at a discreet and feudal distance; and one or two of them were "brought up" and commanded to sing Gaelic songs, which they did with the look of condensed resignation attributed in art to St. Sebastian; and, altogether, it was a good time. At last it was the hour to go home, and a procession of triumph was formed, the pipers playing in front of the ponies on which the deer were carried, the retainers following next, while "the quality" brought up the rear.

Fortunately for Cosmo and Esmè, feudal restrictions were in abeyance; fortunately, also,

Lord Ribston had again fallen sulky, so that, when Lord Germistounne led off with Mrs. Ravenhall, the lovers were able to join each other without hinderance, and very soon fell back, unobserved, to a comfortable distance behind the party.

"Darling, are you happy?" was the wholly superfluous question which Cosmo breathlessly uttered as he gazed into a face bright as the summer sky.

"So happy that I think I never can have been happy before," was the satisfactory reply. But he who supposes that *that* was sufficient knows nothing of these things; for, of course, the question broke out again and again with fond iterations, at short intervals, on the homeward route. On one of these occurrences, Esmè replied, with sudden gloom in her face,

"Ah, no! how, how can I be happy?"

"My own love, what do you mean?"

"Something weighs upon my mind—a solemn duty which I have wickedly neglected — oh, so wickedly!"

"Tell me, dearest, tell me!" cried Cosmo, earnestly.

"I have not yet apologized to you for my intrusion this forenoon, and papa said I must. Can you forgive me for ruining your sport, and putting you to so much inconvenience?" There was but one obvious answer to this; and with similar fond queries and responses, the happy pair moved slowly through the friendly woods.

The party had descended from the hill by a road which led past the old ruin, and when Esmè and Cosmo came within sight of the bridge above it, they saw Lord Germistounne and Phil standing there. Lord Germistounne was waiting for his daughter, and Phil for his comrade; for by the bridge lay the shortest road to Finmore.

It was as well that the lovers had some little time to compose themselves before they reached the bridge, and it was very much better that Lord Germistounne had not seen them just before they rounded a turn in the road which brought them into sight. If he had, Cosmo's interview with his lordship on the morrow might have been dispensed with; for it would scarcely have been the channel of fresh information.

"At church, to-morrow," said Esmè, "I shall tell you the best hour to find papa in the afternoon, if you will not relent, and let me tell him what has happened myself."

"Dearest, you may be sure that, were it possible, I would relent; but, believe me, it is not possible."

"Very well, I will be obedient; and remember, dear, your vow of patience."

"I shall remember *you*, and that will be enough."

Lord Germistounne was looking rather grim when they joined him.

"I trust," he said, "there have been no more dangerous adventures!"

"No, papa, none."

"And I trust you have expressed to Captain Glencairn your regret for your unwarrantable escapade this forenoon?"

"Yes, papa," said Esmè, the fun so dancing in her eyes that she was obliged to lower them; "and he is good enough to say that I did not inconvenience him."

"Hum! Good-afternoon, gentlemen! Come, Esmè."

"I should have thought," said his lordship to Esmè, as they walked home, "that you had had enough of that man's society in your *tête-à-tête* of the morning, without repeating the experience. Do you really find him at all reasonably pleasant? Has he anything to say for himself?"

Again it was well that Lord Germistounne, with his head high in air, did not observe the look of entire confusion which covered his daughter's face, as she answered at random:

"I do not find him at all silent. He is shy, perhaps; but shy people are not always disagreeable; at least, I suppose not. Are they, do you think?"

"I don't suppose they are; but I know they always bore me," said his lordship, who did not notice the slight incoherence of his daughter's words and manner.

And so the subject dropped, leaving, however, in Esmè's candid mind the first pain which love had brought her. Her lover's first injunction had led to her first concealment from her father. Yet she did not blame Cosmo. Far from it; he was on a pinnacle which towered above the clouds of error, and his injunction could not but be right. For the moment, however, its results were distressing. But she whispered to herself that a few hours would set everything to rights, and then concealment and all evils would be at an end; and thus the gentle soul took comfort in roscate dreams.

CHAPTER XL.

Cosmo and Phil had scarcely cleared the bridge when they heard the sound of rapid steps pursuing them, and, turning, saw old Maggie, who had been lurking about in the woods above, not venturing to face Lord Germistounne, who had recently given her to understand, and pretty forcibly, that she was in disgrace, and that her letters of marque, as against the tourists, were in danger of being withdrawn.

"Guid-e'en! guid-e'en! braw gentles!" she cried, running up to them, and panting for breath. "I'm sweet to forgather wi' his lordship eenoo, sae I bude to hide a wee. Hoots! 'Jowk and let the jaw gae by,' ye ken. Eh, sir!" (earnestly addressing Cosmo), "but ye maun be the prood, prood gentleman this nicht! I wuss'd ye weel afore, and I wuss ye joy noo. Ye've gotten the wale o' the world; for she's the wale o't, and wha but she?"

"The pride o' a' the parochin
Is bonny Bessie Lee."

"What are you talking about, Maggie?" said Cosmo, with a crimson face.

"Eh! hard ye e'er the like o' that?"

"Oh, but we're sly, sly!
Oh, but we're sly an' sleekit!"

Div I no ken? did I no see ye wi' my ain twa een comin' doon the shaw? Did I no see ye—

Here Maggie went through a highly suggestive pantomime, which assured Cosmo that some portion at least of their journey through the woods had been supervised.

"Hoots, my bonny gentleman," continued Maggie, "ne'er look sae blate.

"Gin a body meet a body
Comin' thro' the rye,
Giu a body—"

Aweel, aweel! fient haet sall the world be wiser for auld Maggie. But aiblins ye'll hae somethin' for her the nicht—for luck, like?"

"Here, Maggie," said Cosmo, putting into her hand a largess, the like of which she had never seen before; "and now 'good-night;' and please don't come with us any farther."

The old woman stared at the piece of gold in a state of awe which silenced her, and she let them go in peace, only recovering herself in time to shout after them thanks and blessings, adding, with great emphasis, "I'll no tell yon!"

"What's 'yon,' Cosmo?" said Phil, laughing; but he was, of course, already the third participant in the lovers' tender secret.

Far into the night sat the two friends, discussing the attitude and general tactics which Cosmo should adopt at his impending interview with Lord Germistoun, as well as the probabilities, adverse or favorable, of his lordship's conduct under the circumstances. As the splendid glow of the day's excitement abated, the lover could not but acknowledge to himself that the ordeal which he had to go through on the morrow was not only formidable in itself, but that its results promised to be formidable.

"Nonsense!" cried Phil, the sanguine, in answer to this oft-asserted conviction; "he's not half so formidable as you make him out to be. And why should he object to you, when she has made up her mind, and when her happiness is at stake? He is devoted to his daughter, you say?"

"There is no doubt of that."

"Then, of course, he can't object. He might prefer a swell, with a title and all that, of course; but we're not living in the Middle Ages. He can't sacrifice his daughter's happiness without a common-sense reason, and there's nothing of that sort at his disposal."

"I fear he will find reasons which will satisfy him, whether they satisfy common-sense or not."

"Oh, you're unjust to the old gentleman."

"I wish I could believe it."

"Depend upon it, you are. I know exactly what he will say," said Phil, with an air of superior sagacity, "exactly as if I heard him saying it. He will say that it is very sudden. So it is, you know. And he will say that his daughter does not know enough of you—which, of course, is not true. Also, that he had higher views for her—which, of course, is true. But if you manage him properly, he will agree to a deferred engagement. That is to say, no engagement for the present, and no communication to take place between you for, perhaps, a year; after which time, if she is still in the same mind, he will agree to give his consent—for his daughter's sake. I think any fellow with an eye, and who knows things, could see that *that* will be his line, at the very worst."

"It certainly sounds reasonable."

"Well, it does; a little hard, perhaps, but not unreasonable under the circumstances."

In such dialogues, and in ebbs and flows of despondency and confidence, the evening passed.

At church next day the two friends took care

to place themselves in a position more favorable than on the previous Sunday for observing the Dunerlacht pew; and when its occupants entered, Cosmo found that his point of view commanded Esmè in the most satisfactory manner. There were a good many absentees from the castle party—Mrs. Ravenhall, of course, and her brother Tom among them; but when Cosmo saw the procession close without the august form of Lord Germistoun, he was struck with a sudden pang of apprehension. Was his lordship's absence in any way connected with what had occurred? Had he discovered it by some evil chance? And was his wrath so great as to prevent his waiting on the ministrations of the Rev. Donald M'Rorie, which his devotion to the principle of church establishment and a gift of facile slumber enabled him to endure every Sunday without fail? A flash of sunshine from Esmè's happy eyes soon reassured him on this head, and he sat in bliss through the long diet; and although Mr. M'Rorie's discourse turned mainly on the personal habits of Nebuchadnezzar, Cosmo felt that he had seldom been more pleasantly edified.

"Papa is unwell this morning," said Esmè, lingering behind her party, when they left the church, "and I fear we must endure another day of suspense. He is really very cross and impracticable; and I am sure it will be better not to make our confession to-day. To-morrow he will be better, and—all will be well."

"Then we must have patience till to-morrow; but may I not go over and see you this afternoon?"

"It will be more prudent not to come. Besides, all the others would be there, and it would be too tantalizing to see you, and not have you *all* to myself; and I am sure I could not act well enough. Some sharp eyes would read our secret. Mrs. Ravenhall threw out some hints last night which for a moment made me think that she knew it, though, of course, that was impossible."

"But could you not meet me alone out-of-doors?"

"Oh, Cosmo! would that be right?"

"Right, darling! Have you not given yourself to me forever?"

Esmè hesitated for a moment, and then said: "Yes, dearest; and you must know better than I what is right; so I will go, if it is possible. If you can be at the ruin a little after three o'clock, I will try to meet you there."

And here the impatient tossing of Lady Bugles' plumes warned Esmè to join the party in the carriage.

"It would appear," said her ladyship, meaningly, "that Mr. Glencairn has found his tongue all of a sudden. I wonder how the miracle has been effected."

"I wonder!" echoed Esmè, demurely.

Cosmo reached the place of tryst before the appointed hour. How transfigured all the scene appeared to be! And the sound of the waterfall—what a different meaning came forth from it to-day! It was no longer the voice of strife and struggle; it was a diapason of triumph and delight; and the passion of the waters down below was ecstasy; and in the aspect of the gray ruin and of the ancient trees there was no longer any dolor or tragedy.

Across the tumult of diamond spray, from crag to crag, a foam-bow hung its serene iridescence; and as Cosmo, musing, gazed upon it, a light touch fell upon his arm, and in his ear thrilled the low music of Esmè's voice:

"How beautiful! oh, how beautiful! Who could desire a fairer omen?"

Lord Germistoune's indisposition had chanced well for the lovers, for it gave them these golden hours of converse—destined to remain as joys forever in their memories. In that unrestrained communion the innermost inner life of each disclosed itself at last to the other; and at each new revelation, the bands of love were drawn ever closer and more close. Needless to recount how the history of their love was traced, from its dawn to this, its noontide splendor—traced over and over again, only to gain fresh interest at each repetition. And then their plans, their hopes, their aspirations!—the ideal life, they would lead together, the greatness to be achieved by Cosmo, the inspiration to be lent by Esmè, the good to be done by both, living together in righteousness! And, oh, the delight of Esmè to hear that, for her sake, Cosmo had cast aside his fastidious hesitations, and declared for a career where his light would no longer flicker under a bushel, but blaze abroad for the illumination of the world!

"I thought," she said, "that the happiness of making you happy could not be added to; but, when I think of helping to make you great also—oh! dear Cosmo, what have I done to deserve such joy?"

Oh, beautiful dreams of pure and noble souls! the pity of it that, so often, they should be but dreams!

Too swiftly passed these blessed hours, and at last, filled for the moment with hope and faith in what the morrow would bring forth, the lovers parted.

It was very late, and Esmè, though she made all haste, entered the drawing-room last, except her father, of all the dinner-party.

"Ah! Miss Douglas," cried Lord Ribston, "you must have had fern-seed for luncheon to-day, for you have been invisible all the afternoon, though I sought you with bitter tears. I suppose it was the old story. Another old harridan taken ill, and in want of stimulants. Now, tell me, am I not right?"

"No, Lord Ribston, you are not right."

"An old man, then?"

"You are wrong again."

"What a catechism you are, Lord Ribston, and what a narrow range you allow to Miss Douglas's errands of love and mercy!" said Mrs. Ravenhall, regarding Esmè with a look of malicious fun which brought the color to her cheek, and convinced her that, somehow or other, Mrs. Ravenhall *did* know "all about it."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE next forenoon, as Cosmo was approaching the castle, he met Esmè, who was waiting to give him a last word of love and encouragement before he went to the tribunal. The crisis was an anxious one, and, face to face with it now, she perhaps saw all its hazards, with very clear

perceptions, for the first time. Nevertheless, when she saw the gravity of Cosmo's face, she summoned all the brightness she could command into her own, and assumed a tone of hope and confidence for once not quite sincere.

"Papa is very well this morning," she said, "and in his best mood; and if you will remember patience, dear Cosmo, all *must* be well."

"I shall remember *you*, my beloved."

"You must tell him of your political prospects—that will please him; but politics are delicate ground with him, as you know already."

"And what shall I say about you, darling? You know that I am also your ambassador."

"You will tell him the truth."

"And that is—?"

"That I love you."

"My angel!"

"And that I never, never can change. But I don't think papa will expect me to change; so I am sure he will consent."

"Where shall I find you when I leave Lord Germistoune?"

"I shall wait for you on the path leading to the Fall. Now, dearest, we must part. Remember that all my heart goes with you."

Cosmo then left her and went on to the house, where he rung the bell, and asked for Lord Germistoune, with the best air of unconcern he could assume.

It was not a canonical hour of visitation, and it was the hour consecrated by Lord Germistoune to business; and so, though the servant admitted that his master was at home, he implied that there might be some difficulty about an audience.

"I have come," said Cosmo, who was resolved that there should be no further postponements, "on most important business, and I *must* see his lordship."

"I'll tell his lordship, sir."

"Quite unnecessary. Please show me to his room at once."

And, impressed by his tone of decision, the man obeyed. Lord Germistoune was in his business-room, and seated at his business-table, which was covered with all the paraphernalia of business, arranged with formal precision. The expression of his countenance bore the impress of his surroundings, and was one of grave absorption in weighty matters. And, indeed, no ordinary concern occupied the noble lord to-day. He rose, and, with formal politeness, invited Cosmo to seat himself.

"I hope," said the latter, "that you are better to-day?"

"I really don't know whether I am better or not. I cannot think of my ailments. This accursed circumstance gives me no leisure, you may well believe, to think of anything else. 'This accursed circumstance!' he repeated, slapping the table for emphasis, and staring steadily at his visitor.

Cosmo's heart sunk. Some bird of the air, then, had carried the story of his love to the angry old man, and this was his verdict—it was "an accursed circumstance!"

"What have you got to say about it?" continued Lord Germistoune.

Cosmo's programme had presupposed such a very different introduction to the subject, that he was fairly taken aback, and could only say, after

a little delay, "I should like to hear your own calm and deliberate opinion, Lord Germistounne."

"You shall have it. The last sentence I had written contains it; and here it is: 'Lord Germistounne is at a loss which most to marvel at—the astounding audacity of the step, or the monstrous imbecility which could hope for its success.' There! that is Lord Germistounne's calm and deliberate opinion."

"I deeply regret to hear it," said Cosmo; "but I trust it is not final."

"Regret! Final! Do you mean to say that you sympathize with their villany?"

"Villany, Lord Germistounne?—their villany? I must misunderstand you. I don't know to what you allude."

"Why, you know they've struck, don't you?"

"Who have struck?" cried Cosmo, in deep bewilderment. But now there was an explanation. The post had just brought the news that five hundred miners on his lordship's Welsh property had had the hardihood to go out on strike. The question was between the Glencairn Company, which leased the mineral field, and the men; but Lord Germistounne was not the man to let any groundings on his estate assert themselves in such a monstrous fashion without a fulmination on his part, and all the less so that his own pecuniary interests, as a share-holder in the company, were directly affected. He was now, therefore, in the act of penning an instrument suitable to the occasion; and it was the last sentence of this which he had just read. With his mind full of the Glencairn Company, he at once connected Cosmo's visit with the business of the moment, and so had expressed neither the surprise nor the disapprobation which his unauthorized intrusion might otherwise have produced.

"And so you know nothing about all this?" cried Lord Germistounne, when the explanation had been made.

"No, nothing whatever; and I must tell you that I have no personal share or interest in the company."

"I presumed, of course, that your visit bore on this scandalous affair. As I appear to have been mistaken, you will forgive me for asking to what I may attribute it. These are my business hours. In point of fact, it is a standing rule that I don't receive before luncheon; and to-day, as you see, I am especially occupied."

"I am distressed to put you to inconvenience," said Cosmo; "but my reason for calling upon you is a most urgent one. When you know its nature, I think you will not be surprised that I have ventured to intrude, even at this hour."

"Hum!"

"That, at least, you will consider natural."

"Hum!"

"Whatever your other sentiments may be."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

There was a pause, during which Cosmo found that his prearranged plan of attack had entirely evaporated, as such plans usually do. Lord Germistounne was not in the mood to give him much time to reconstruct it, and he soon said,

"The nature of your business is—"

"Is personal, and of extreme delicacy."

"Personal to yourself, or to whom?"

"To myself, and—others; indeed, it concerns you very nearly."

"Perhaps you will kindly explain it—categorically. Ahem!"

"If you will kindly give me your attention for a few moments, and forgive the egotism of my remarks, which will be unavoidable, I shall endeavor to do so. You do not know much of me, Lord Germistounne, but I think you know, in a general way, who I am. From your remarks just now, in talking of this trade dispute, I infer that you are aware that I am the son of Mr. Archibald Glencairn, and that you are, more or less, acquainted with him?"

Lord Germistounne assented by a gesture, and Cosmo continued:

"I am not, as I have said, connected with his business, nor, indeed, with any business. I have inherited, from another source, a fortune which, even nowadays, is called considerable, and which enables me to be my own master. I have enjoyed many advantages of education, though I do not pretend to have profited by them as I ought to have done. Since leaving the army I have travelled a great deal, and devoted myself, with some energy, to various branches of study. I have now an early prospect of entering Parliament, and it is my intention to pursue a political career. That is a brief *résumé* of my past history and future prospects."

Lord Germistounne was, of course, not a little puzzled by all this, and his irritation was kept in check by his bewilderment; but when Cosmo came to a pause, he said, hastily,

"You make this statement with some purpose, of course. May I ask what it is?"

Cosmo continued:

"There is one omission which I have made, and which, in perfect candor, I must supply, and it is this—that, though I descend, through my mother, from a good family, of even high position, my birth on the father's side is obscure. Our history does not go beyond three generations, and it then disappears in a strong suspicion of illegitimacy. I have now stated, as honestly as I can, my exact position in life."

"You will allow me to say, Mr. Glencairn, that this confidence is unsought, and, let me add, quite unnecessary. If I have been content to admit you to my house without question, you, I think, may be satisfied to accept the privilege without obtruding unasked for explanations. I admit that discussions have taken place in the circle here as to your antecedents. You have probably become aware of this fact, and this, no doubt, is the cause of your visit and your explanation. But when I decide to admit a gentleman to my house, you may depend upon it that I know what I am about. I am perfectly able to regulate the exact amount of intimacy to which any one ought to be admitted. In short, I am able to take care of myself. If I had thought it necessary, I would have asked you for certain explanations; as it was unnecessary, I have refrained; and when I have added—which I think I am bound to add—that your desire to avoid even the suspicion of false pretenses is not discreditable to you, all has been said which requires to be said. Now, I fear I must remind you that there are strong prior claims on my time this morning."

His lordship took up the thunder-bolt which he had been concocting for the Welsh miners, and added,

"It is necessary that these miscreants should be dealt with, without the delay of a single post. I must therefore, I fear, wish you good-morning."

He was moving toward the bell, when Cosmo interrupted him.

"I must beg you, my lord," he said, "to bear with me a little longer. You have misinterpreted the object of my visit. I have not even hinted at it as yet."

Lord Germistounne turned impatiently, and cried,

"I am at a loss to conceive with what other object you should think it necessary to favor me with your biographical sketch. I do not wish to be discourteous, but I must say that you can scarcely suppose that it has any special interest for me."

"Indeed it has, Lord Germistounne."

"Now! now! now!"

"In connection with what I am about to say."

Lord Germistounne threw himself impatiently into his chair, and tossed his papers about with an angry hand. "Pray go on, sir," he said—"pray go on, and be as brief, I beg, as is possible!"

"I have told you," said Cosmo, "about myself, as I was bound in honor as a gentleman to do—keeping back nothing that could tell against me, and having but little, I fear, to say in my own favor. I have done this, Lord Germistounne, that you may know who *exactly* is the man who ventures to come before you, honestly, and openly at least, if not hopefully, as a suitor—"

"A suitor, sir? For what? or whom?" cried Lord Germistounne.

"For your daughter's hand."

The old lord fell back in his chair; his hair seemed literally to stand on end; his face grew white and then livid, and his eyes stared fixedly, as though Cosmo were some apparition from the unseen world. All power of speech seemed to forsake him.

Cosmo went on:

"This takes you by surprise, Lord Germistounne, and I can see that the surprise is not a pleasant one, and I can understand why this should be so. I am painfully aware of my unworthiness of Miss Douglas. I know to what a different match she is, in every way, entitled. I was so convinced of this, that, when I found her influence threatening to become irresistible, I withdrew myself from it. But I found that it was too late; my destiny was already fixed and irrevocable. I then resolved—you may think the resolution desperate, and even absurd—to attempt, with whatever ability I may possess, to arrive at such personal distinction as might help to bridge the gulf which separates us socially. I took measures to commence the career I have mentioned already, and I am going to pursue it with all my might. But I have no illusions as to my abilities. I know that I may well fail, and that even if I reach success, it must be worked for and waited for patiently. Believe me that I am prepared to work hard, and to wait patiently. In the mean time, alas! love cannot wait; it will not be controlled by prudence, and it speaks."

"It *dares* to speak!" hissed Lord Germistounne, without altering his look or attitude.

"Yes, it dares to speak, as a man will dare do

anything for life; and it dares to ask you to give me a little hope—even in the far future. It dares to ask this, not for the sake of *my* happiness, which can be nothing to you, but for hers, which to you must be all-important."

Lord Germistounne sprang up suddenly from his lethargy, and cried, with recovered voice, "*Her* happiness? Your presumption does not carry you the length of pretending to answer for *that*?"

"It is no longer mere pretense, nor is it presumption."

"What do you mean, sir, in the name of ten thousand devils?"

"I mean that, unworthy though I be, I am entitled to answer for her unreservedly."

"You do not dare to tell me that you have spoken to my daughter?"

"Yes, Lord Germistounne, I have spoken to her, and she will tell you herself, as she has told me, that she loves me, and will never change."

Lord Germistounne was dumb for a moment, and then gasped out, as though choking with passion, "And you believe this?"

"Yes, as firmly as if I had the word of an angel for it. Ah, Lord Germistounne, her words are not lightly spoken. She will never change. Think of this and her happiness, and believe that, if ever there was devotion in man's nature, it is in mine for her; and that what power is in me to make me worthier of her, I will use it with all my strength, and through all my life. I urge—"

"Silence, sir!" cried Lord Germistounne, starting to his feet. "I have never been easily astonished. I shall never be astounded again. There is the door, sir! take yourself out of it as quickly as may be, and never presume to address me or my daughter again!"

"You give me no reason, Lord Germistounne."

"Reason, sir? Even your crazy self-assurance can scarcely require to be told that a lady with the blood of kings in her veins, and who will be a peeress in her own right, is, in my opinion, beyond the contamination which you imagine for her. Go, sir! go, I say!"

"Contamination!" cried Cosmo, starting forward, with the fire flashing from his eyes; "no man shall dare—" Then he recollected himself, paused, and said, "I promised to be patient, and I will at least avoid the contamination of disloyalty to her."

CHAPTER XLII.

HARDLY knowing what he did, Cosmo rushed from the house, and strode with vehement steps up through the woods. The interview had been protracted by frequent long pauses, and Esmè, walking on in anxious meditation, had reached the spot where, yesterday, the lovers parted in the glow of happiness and hope. When Cosmo saw her in the distance, she was standing, as he had been standing, and gazing at the Fall which had hung out for them its bow of promise, so soon, alas! to prove illusory. At sight of her, all her gentle, loving ways, her sweet encouragements, her bright auguries, her happiness, her hopes, her love, and her pride in it—all these things rushed into his mind, confused and almost maddened as it was. The blow he had received

had so stunned him that he had not yet realized his own anguish, and the sight of her first brought it home to him in a burst of bitterest emotion. But it was of her, and for her, that he thought. To tell her the fatal truth, to tell her that their dream was dissolved, to see her radiant face grow dark, to hear the happy music die from her sweet voice—oh, the misery, the misery of this! How could he endure it? He stopped irresolute, striving to control his feelings and nerve himself for her sake. Suddenly she turned and saw him, and forthwith ran to meet him, with the simple eagerness of her guileless nature. As she drew near and saw the sadness of his face, she read in it their fate; and she, too, feeling first for her lover's grief, stretched out her arms to him, and cried, in accents of infinite tenderness, "Oh, my beloved! oh, my poor darling! it is I who have brought you to this!"

He took her by the hand and led her back, without a word, to the spot which for them had been the scene of so many emotions; nor did he speak until they had been, for a long time, seated side by side, gazing in sad silence on the waters which looked so black and wild to-day. At last he roused himself and told her what had passed, softening, as best he might, the harsher details of the interview.

"Did papa hold out no hope—none at all?" said Esmè, with a pathetic tremble in her voice, and looking at him through a mist of tears which began to escape over her pale cheeks.

"Alas! no, dearest—I must not deceive you—not a hope."

"Oh, my darling! I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! My heart will break!" And she burst into an agony of weeping.

Cosmo held her in his strong arms, and soothed her with low-murmured words of fondness; and as a child in grief clings to its comforter, so did she cling to him, sobbing out the passion of her sorrow on her lover's breast. And in that pure embrace and in that moment of bitterness, the love of the man—ever tenderest when it protects, and of the woman—ever fondest when it leans upon the strong, were drawn together in bonds that must surely prove indissoluble. Gradually the relief of tears worked its charm; slowly her sobs died away, and she lay quiet in the resting-place she was so soon to lose. Cosmo bent down and gently kissed her, and she raised herself at last, calm, and with the wraith of a piteous smile on her poor, trembling lips. "We said 'Forever!' dearest," she murmured; "and it is 'forever' still, is it not?"

"Forever and forever!" said Cosmo, fervently.

"I cannot disobey papa, you know," she went on; "and if he will keep us separate, we must be separate, but our hearts can never be separate: can they, dear?"

"Never!"

"And he can never make me love any one else—that is impossible; and you will never love any one else—I feel so sure, oh, so sure, of that! And I will come here every day, and remember all your words and think of you, so that I shall seem to hear your dear voice speaking them; and everything will remind me of you, so that I shall almost seem to see you. Oh, poor darling! you will not have this comfort. But promise me that you will come here, every day, in your thoughts—thinking of all the things

here that we have looked at together—thinking of them with all your might, and saying to yourself, 'Esmè is looking at them now, and thinking of me, and loving me, with all her heart.' Then we shall really almost meet, shall we not? Promise me this, darling Cosmo."

"Promise, my own! Wherever you are, my thoughts and my heart shall be with you, night and day—while I live."

"And, oh, dear Cosmo! something seems to tell me now—even now, when all is so dark—that we need not despair. Papa will surely relent when he is convinced that I can never change; and you are so good and so noble, and you will be so great, if you will only persevere and not despond, that he will be forced to relent. Then, dear, promise me that you will not despair, but that you will go on in your work, and work with all your might. Say to yourself that I am standing beside you, trying to help you with my prayers and my love; for I shall hear of you, if I cannot see you, and in all your troubles and in all your triumphs my heart shall be with you. I know that you will do this, will you not?"

"I will," said Cosmo, but his voice failed him for further utterance.

"And I know," continued Esmè, "that whatever you do, you will do it not for yourself only, nor even for my sake only, but far more for the sake of doing what is good and noble, like yourself. And so I think that God will help us, if we are only patient, and trust in him. Yes, he will help us. So I am not going to be unhappy any more, but quite cheerful; and I am sure that this 'good-bye' is only for a very little, and that we shall meet again, not to be separated any more."

Cosmo was far more overcome by these touching words—striving, as they did, so bravely and so unselfishly, to bring him comfort—than by all that had passed before, and it was only after several vain attempts to speak that he was able to say, "I promise all. I shall try to deserve God's help."

Hours had passed. They felt that the moment of parting had inexorably come; and, as they stood together in that last solemn silence which precedes a solemn separation, the sound of rapid steps was heard, and a moment after Mrs. Ravenhall stood before them. Her air was one of haste and excitement, and she addressed Esmè at once, without in any way noticing Cosmo.

"They have been searching for you everywhere, dear Esmè, and your father is very seriously disturbed about your absence. He would have gone out and come here to look for you himself, but I persuaded him, with great difficulty, to let me come instead. I feared that in his present agitation something painful might occur, and so I came myself. Now, we must not delay a moment; do come away."

"I will come, Mrs. Ravenhall." Then she turned to Cosmo, and murmured, in a low voice, "Good-bye," and Cosmo murmured "Good-bye," and she was turning to depart. In all that had passed their real farewells had been already taken; they comprehended each other absolutely, and their hearts were one. But to Esmè's tender nature this cold formality was intolerable, and, regardless of Mrs. Ravenhall's presence, she once more threw herself passionately on her lov-

er's breast. "Good-bye," she cried, "my own! my most beloved! I do not care who knows it and who sees it. I am proud of my love, and it will never die or change—never! never!"

Mrs. Ravenhall looked up into the sky and down into the deeps—either from discretion, or because this was a "scene," and in contravention of her code, which placed under a ban all display of genuine human feeling. Presently Esmè stood beside her; "I am ready now, Mrs. Ravenhall," she said, and in another moment the lovers were parted—Mrs. Ravenhall thought, forever.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ESMÈ walked by her friend's side, quietly weeping. It might have melted a very hard heart to see the tears and the sorrow of one so young and lovable. It did not touch Mrs. Ravenhall's heart, however; not because it was hard, but because it was an empty shell, containing no emotional machinery. It did something else, however, which answers quite as well in society as the efflux of true sympathy: it awoke a sense of personal discomfort, which the grief of others always produced in Mrs. Ravenhall, who liked to see bright faces and to hear happy voices, just as she preferred sunshine to storm and warmth to cold. This sense of personal discomfort struggling for alleviation, moved her to apply to Esmè's woe such balm as is to be extracted from glozing words of spurious sympathy. In this way (having told Esmè that her father had apprised her of what had taken place) she conjured her to be of good cheer, pointing out that it is usually darkest just before dawn, that it is a long lane which has no turning, and adducing many similar floscules of proverbial consolation. Lord Germistoun, she said, was, of course, angry just now—rather seriously angry, indeed; but, if he was swift to wrath, he was quickly appeased. His fondness for her would plead with his anger. She herself had already somewhat mollified him, she hoped, by explaining that old heads can by no means be put on young shoulders, and that Esmè's good sense and filial piety would soon bring her to cheerful submission. In fine, all would soon be forgiven and forgotten, and they would, in point of fact, live happy ever after.

"No," said Esmè, quietly, "I will submit and try to be patient, and papa may forgive" ("forgive!" she repeated, indignantly), "but I can never be happy—never be really happy any more, unless papa relents. There can be no forgetfulness for me."

Mrs. Ravenhall laughed in her sleeve. "Poor little thing!" she thought; "in a month she will have forgotten all about him. In the mean time it would be wretched work here; and his lordship's announcement that we are all to get our dismissal to-morrow was perfectly welcome."

"Well, darling Esmè," she said aloud, as they reached the house, "you know that you will always have a true and loving friend in me, and what I can do to help your happiness I will always do—depend upon that. Go straight to your father, dear; do not be afraid of him. He will not be very harsh or severe, I am sure."

"I am not afraid of papa; I never have been

afraid of him; and, as I have done nothing wrong, I have no fear now."

In this frame she went bravely to Lord Germistoun's room. We should be sorry to harrow our readers by describing minutely all that the poor girl suffered there. Her father felt that all his pride of ancestry, station, wealth, prestige, all his jealous love for his daughter—*his* only child, *his* future representative—had been outraged, insulted, sullied even, by being dragged, even in the imagination, down into a connection with this nameless nobody, whom he had always disliked, and whose presumption now simply maddened him. Shaken with the passion which all this stirred, he was, at first, violent and incoherent as a lunatic. But Esmè kept silence, strengthening herself in her patience by the recollection of what Cosmo had borne for her sake, and leaning, in her heart, on the stay and comfort of his great love. And since wrath which is noisy soon exhausts itself in its declamations, and since wrath which meets no resistance soon loses its impetus, and since an old man's wrath fails for lack of the energy of life, it thus soon befell that Lord Germistoun, physically exhausted by hours of concentrated excitement, became, if not more reasonable, at least somewhat calmer; and the interview closed as follows:

"Before you leave this room, Esmè, you shall give me a solemn undertaking, absolutely and entirely to give up this man, and to think no more of him."

"I will promise you, papa, not to marry him while you withhold your consent."

"And you will hold no communication with him?"

"None, while you forbid it."

"And you will banish him from your thoughts?"

"No, papa, I will not do that."

"What! you dare to say this to my face?"

"I cannot promise what is impossible. I have never deceived you in anything, and I never will deceive you. And I wish you to know that I never will cease to love him. Nothing can change me. I have vowed it in words, and if honor would not keep me true to my vow, my heart would."

"Don't talk this rubbish to me about vows, and hearts, and lovers' eternities—I know the value of it. I'm not a girl."

"Oh, papa! papa! remember that I am but a girl, and do not be so hard and cruel. Remember that, if you separate me from him, and take away your own love also, I shall indeed be desolate."

With these plaintive words, she laid her hand beseechingly on his arm; and the old man, in spite of himself, was touched by the forlorn aspect of the one being whom in all the world he loved. He repressed any symptom of softening, however, except that he said, in a gentler tone, "You may leave me now, Esmè. If you deserve my love, you shall not lose it."

When he was left alone he muttered to himself, "Time—time, and judicious coldness and firmness on my part—these will bring her to her senses: and then London and a groove will do the rest. If she had been more in London, this madness would not have taken her; if she had been formed by conventional women, she would have been incapable of it. But it is not too late

yet! No, no—not too late. London and a groove!”

Esmè did not appear either that night or the next morning. Her father made her apologies. An overwhelming headache, he said, kept her to her room; and only Mrs. Ravenhall saw her to take farewell. When she crept down-stairs in the afternoon, the house was silent and empty; every guest had departed; silence within and gloom without—black skies and moaning winds, and dreary rain-drofts marching up the glen. In this sad fashion closed those three bright weeks; and Esmè, bereft of her lover and estranged from her father, was truly all alone.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Cosmo did not remain long in the spot where their passionate farewell had been taken. He gave one last look at the Fall, and the old castle, and the woods—intently gazing at them, as though to fix indelibly in his mind every detail of the scene where his spirit was to come and keep its daily tryst with Esmè. Then he strode rapidly away through the woods, and across the bridge, in the direction of Finmore. Other eyes had beheld the lovers' pathetic interview and their tearful parting. Perched in her eyrie, up in the ruined tower, the crazy old woman who had more than once intervened so inopportunistically, observed it all from first to last. But she did not come down; she remained perfectly still and silent, watching the scene with a strangely solemn look in her vague face, and only muttering to herself, now and then, some scrap of doleful song suggested by what was passing down below:

“‘Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae farewell, alas! forever!”

Oh, but it's waefu'! it's waefu'! My ain heart's fit to brak.”

And when the last parting took place, the poor old creature, who dearly loved Esmè, in her fitful way, fairly lifted up her voice and wept, sobbing to herself, “Oh, my bonny leddy! my bonny leddy! that's aye sae gude to me! what for wad they gang to break her kind heart? Oh, my bonny leddy!”

The last sound which Cosmo heard, as he passed the bridge, was her voice singing among the crags up above,

“Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.”

This was the sadly appropriate farewell which Dunerlacht gave him.

When he reached home, he walked into the room where Phil was sitting, and said, abruptly, “It is all over, Phil—finally, as far as Lord Germistoun can make it final. He rejected me with every sort of scorn. But, please, ask me no questions, and say nothing more about it. I can't bear it yet. I'm going to take a long walk now; I can't remain still.”

“Let me come with you, my dear fellow. It's bad to be alone with a sad heart.”

“No, no; but thank you all the same. I must be quite alone. Don't wait dinner for me,

or sit up, or mind me in any way. It may be midnight before I return.”

Then Cosmo went away and wandered far and wide, without destination or purpose, save to wear out the spirit of unrest, which held him in its grip. He was visible no more that night; and when he appeared next day, his friend was by no means surprised to hear that he was going to leave Finmore within an hour.

“I am going,” he said, “for a month of rapid movement and continual change of scene—for a month, or a shorter time, if I recover my senses sooner. Then I shall return to fulfil my pledge to her—to work, to hope, to believe, and, I trust, at last to win her; for while I live I shall never despair. Stay here, Phil, as long as you please, and the longer the better. The establishment is all engaged for two months more, and it is a pity you should lose the chance of so good a moor. I shall not return, of course.”

Phil wished rather to accompany his afflicted friend on his travels, but Cosmo would not hear of this; so he agreed to remain by himself at Finmore, but only for a week.

So Cosmo bade Phil farewell, and went on his way.

As he went to the station and by the road which led past the castle, he saw an open vehicle approaching him, which seemed to contain three persons, and to be piled high with luggage in front. As it came up, Cosmo discovered that it conveyed Tom Wyedale and his servant, and he was for passing with a hurried salutation. But Tom would not suffer this, halting him with lusty shouts, and begging him to descend and come apart for a few minutes' conversation on urgent private affairs.

When they had got to a few paces' distance from the servants, Tom stopped, with a grave face, and said, “I've heard, my dear old boy, through my sister, of this confounded catastrophe.”

“What do you mean?” cried Cosmo, angrily.

“Oh, Cosmo! Cosmo! am I not your oldest friend? Don't do dignity with me, man! I know all about it, and there's no one can be half so sorry for it as I am, except she and you. But cheer up, old fellow! It will all come right at last. I've always thought that you and she were made for each other—ever since that time down at Cadenabbia. That's paying you a compliment, I can tell you. I have not known many women who were good for much, besides herself; and she's good enough to redeem the character of the whole sex. And I say it will all come right, *because* she is so good, and would never throw a fellow over when she once liked him; I am sure of that. Still, Cosmo, I'm awfully sorry for you—awfully.”

“Thanks, Tom; you're a good fellow.”

“And I was thinking, Cosmo, that it might be a comfort to you, when you're down in your luck (which won't last long, I think, for his lordship is not immortal, and, fortunately, stricken in years and really getting shaky)—that it might be a comfort to you, when down in your luck, to have your old pal with you, who would do his best to cheer you up. So here I have come, with bag and baggage, to take no refusal, but force my way into Finmore. I'm leaving Dunerlacht, at any rate; so don't suppose I'm putting myself to inconvenience.”

"It's really good of you, Tom," said Cosmo; "but, you see, I'm on a journey myself. Indeed, I'm not going back to Finmore."

"What! and you're going to leave all that grand shooting which Davidson says you've hardly touched?"

"Phil Denwick is to stay there for a week."

"A week! and one gun!"

"Oh, Tom! if you like to go on there, and stay in my absence, you are most welcome. Stay till the end of the season, if you please. You will find servants and everything there, and no one knows I'm not going to return."

"My dear Cosmo, that is a very good offer, and a very kind one. It is not likely that I shall be able to stay long, and it will be sad to be there in your absence, knowing the unhappy cause of it. Still, I will go there for a little. I think it will be a relief to your mind to know that the grouse are being properly shot, won't it?"

"It's well they should not be wasted. Good-bye, Tom."

"Good-bye, and good luck to you before long!"

And so this fortunate scamp, amidst the disasters of his friends, rose, as usual, to the surface; and went on, and, to the joy of old Davidson, abode at Finmore for many weeks, and made himself thoroughly comfortable, and "toozled" the "Three Kimmers" to his heart's content, and "slated" the game everywhere, as it had seldom been "slated" before.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE eight months succeeding the events narrated in our last chapter effected a good many changes in the external circumstances of Esmè and Cosmo. Lord Germistoun, accustomed to have his own way in all things, was, at first, impatient to extract from his daughter an acknowledgment of her error, and a confession that she had ceased to think of Cosmo; and, at short intervals, recurred to the subject with the formal expression of a hope that she had "come to her senses." But Esmè, always candid and fearless, never wavered from her original declaration. For her "change was impossible;" and although she expressed this with all gentleness, and with dutiful regret that there should be variance between her father and herself, it was with a constant firmness which gradually led the old lord to suspect that the high-handed system would not answer. At last, under the inspiration of Mrs. Ravenhall, whom he consulted by letter, he was persuaded to adopt a more politic method, which aimed at the reduction of obstinacy by the influence of time and silence. Exercising an amount of self-restraint which was very irksome to him, he ceased to make any allusion to "the affair," and Cosmo's name never crossed his lips, though that "audacious miscreant" was constantly, and bitterly, in his thoughts. But this change did not greatly avail Esmè; for her father had resolved to combine with the silent something like the solitary system; that is to say, he would neither pay nor receive visits: and in this he persevered for some weeks, with the results on his irritable temper which were naturally to be expected. From it poor Esmè had much to endure;

and what with that, what with the blankness of life when it is only illumined by vague and distant hopes, her lot promised to be a sad one. Indeed, when she looked out on the glorious summer of love and sympathy which was in one sense so near, and in another sense so far, the winter of her discontent was, at times, all but intolerably cold, and dark, and dreary. But here, again, Mrs. Ravenhall intervened, strongly deprecating such a modification of the system which she had induced Lord Germistoun to adopt; and here, again, his lordship was persuaded to change his tactics. He did so, as he did everything, in a violent and exaggerated way. He filled the castle with guests; he offered visits, right and left, in the district; when he had exhausted it, he shifted his quarters to Ferniehall, and kept open house there; and at all the festive gatherings which at this time of the year keep Scotland in a state of high carnival, he and his daughter were present, without fail. Hitherto he had affected a certain regal exclusiveness and social reserve; he had avoided, to use his own phrase, "making himself cheap;" and his change of habits naturally excited remark. Those who knew him little, solved the problem by deciding that he wished to get his daughter married; those who knew him best thought that he was not the man to take any initiative in such a matter, expecting—as he certainly would expect—to be beset by swarms of suitors—all of the highest distinction—from among whom it would simply be his duty to select the most eligible. Those who knew him least were, however, nearer to the mark.

Hitherto he had put away from his mind, as distasteful, the idea of Esmè's marriage; he felt that when the swarms began to close round him, it would be time enough seriously to consider it. But this horrible affair had altered all his views, and alarmed him seriously in more ways than one. It was true that during his lifetime he could prevent Esmè from marrying Cosmo; and her dutifulness was so strong that he might almost reckon on his veto holding good when he was no longer alive to enforce it. But what if this prohibition should result in her remaining permanently single? It was this consideration which affected him almost, if not quite, as much as Cosmo's outrageous audacity; for with Esmè the entail ended, the titles would be extinct, the family, in fact, at an end. Lord Germistoun had, therefore, revolutionized his habits for the present, with a double object. In the bustle and excitement of a gay life, Cosmo was to be forgotten by Esmè; and in the haunts of the eligible, she was to meet an appropriate magnate who, by espousing her, should save the family from extinction. Propelled, therefore, by these two motives, the old lord dragged Esmè about the country, eager to be everywhere, like a match-making mother who hungers and thirsts for the espousal of her daughters; eager to be everywhere, yet choked with the sense of humiliation which all this involved, and, in the extra *hauteur* of his manner and acerbity of his tone, visiting the resentment which it caused upon all the world. If there had been any chance that his daughter would coincide in his matrimonial schemes for her, his own conduct would have neutralized them. For, now looking upon all young men as possible, and even probable, aspirants, he carried himself scowlingly toward every youth, un-

til cause had been shown why he should do otherwise; and, even in the case of any one who, being eligible, showed a disposition to pay attention to his daughter, his lordship thought it due to himself to adopt a tone of suspicious austerity and condescension which was meant to convey to the young man that it was only by the stretching of a point that he could be considered eligible, and that there was no sort of margin to spare. And, indeed, in deciding on the question of eligibility, he was honestly in this dilemma—that no one who was not very great was good enough; and any one who was great enough to be good enough would be apt, by superiority of title, to swamp the Germistounes honors: and that his family should be extinguished, by merging even in a ducal house, outraged an egotism which took cognizance of the unborn generations of his descendants to the end of time.

It came to pass from all this that suitors were discouraged, and that young men in general were frightened away from Esmè, not caring to run the blockade of her father's fierce and sleepless observation. Before long, Lord Germistoun could not but see that she was not sought after, the blame of which he, of course, laid at her door alone. "She is hankering after that villain Glencairn, and so snubs every one else." This was how he explained it to himself; and the fire of his wrath burned yet the more hotly against "the villain," and reflected itself in the harsh tone which he adopted toward his daughter.

From Scotland, Lord Germistoun carried her to his seat in Wales, and there, for a time, mystified his neighbors by his novel ways of life; and thence, in the feverish pursuit of his objects, he took her abroad for the winter. Whatever virtue change of scene may have in obliterating misplaced attachments, he certainly gave it a fair trial—rushing from place to place in that region of the Continent with which the pursuit of health had, before now, made him very familiar. With the exception of Monte Carlo, there was scarcely a station on the Riviera of which he did not make trial. He liked Cannes—he had always liked it; for the people there were generally more or less *comme il faut*, and the climate was, as a rule, pleasant. But, after a fortnight, he found that, on this occasion, it did not suit his purpose. There was little distraction and no excitement, and the male visitors were—as they always are—octogenarian, sick, married, or beardless. In short, it was unavailable. Nice had never been to his taste, but he tried even it, and found it, as of yore, full of rococo English and Americans, and with a foreign element which made his aristocratic and respectable blood boil and freeze in turns. Carried past the sunny, but sinful, heights of Monaco, Esmè had to dree the weird of a ghastly week in that stuffy *morgue*—Menton; and another in San Remo, that fair paradise of deadly dulness; and thereafter expiated her sins in a penitential pilgrimage, which brought her, by fits and starts, through Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, to Rome. In all these places her father conducted himself with the same feverish haste and insolence; looking in, as it were, at the door of society in each; scanning its *personnel*, and then retiring with the sort of air adopted by some supercilious exquisites, of seeing no one "good enough" to justify his continuance in such a sphere.

At Rome they fell in with Tom Wyedale, who, having "broken the bank" at Monte Carlo, had resolved not to give the bank a chance of recouping itself at his expense, and so had fallen back on the Eternal City, which, that winter, offered exceptional facilities for relieving pecuniary plethora by means of *baccarat*.

Lord Germistoun was by no means cordial to Tom, and discouraged intimacy. In his eyes, Tom was no longer the light-hearted *farceur*; he was now a probable aspirant, and therefore, probably a crafty, designing dog; besides which, he was the intimate ally of the man who had caused all this woe. Esmè was overjoyed to see her old friend, who, besides being the friend of Cosmo, was hearty and cheery, and a very bright relief to the gloom which surrounded her. Tom himself had little difficulty in comprehending the ordeal to which she was being subjected, and his kindly nature longed to give her comfort. And he did give her comfort, in the best possible way, by talking about Cosmo, with the unconsciousness which he knew how to assume, and by accidentally, as it were, giving her minute intelligence about him, which cheered her with the knowledge that her lover was true to his vow not to despond, but to hope and work. As to his love, she required no assurance on that head. It was delightful thus to talk about him again, and with one who, though apparently unconscious, was so sympathetic in his views of Cosmo; it was delightful, but her satisfaction was too obvious, and so brought its own extinction. For, when her father observed the pleasure she had in meeting Tom, his suspicions became acute, and he let his quondam *protégé* know, very frankly, that his society was not desired. So Tom was completely disestablished, and deeply resented the loss of many dining and other advantages which he had counted on extracting from the "old Buffalo."

In this strange way the winter passed for Esmè—passed like an evil dream, in which her father's spasms of wild vagary and personal unkindness constituted the episodes, and the forlorn sense of separation, and the anguish of love's hopes deferred, formed the grand central trouble upon which the episodes of evil dreams are built. From all the many sources of pleasure once familiar to her in these places of sojourn she was now in a manner cut off. Her father dogged her like a detective, and contrived, by methods more galling than open words, to let her feel that she was suspected and under surveillance. The glories of nature, the beauties of art, and the delights of social intercourse, lose their charm under such conditions, and Esmè had no alleviations. It was, therefore, to her unmingled satisfaction when an alarm of fever at Rome decided her father to return to London much earlier than he had purposed. Her lot could not be worse there than here; and she would, at all events, be near Cosmo, perhaps see him sometimes; and that, even though they must hold no communication, was much—indeed, a world of consolation. So that Lord Germistoun's varied efforts to efface, stamp out, or supplant her affection had been all so much labor in vain. They had helped to take the color from her cheek and the brightness from her manner, but that was all. The old lord had more, a great deal more, than a suspicion that this was the case; but of course

there was no relenting on his part; and so they were no sooner settled in the family mansion in town than he set about taking measures which, under proper safeguards, should insure for Esme every opportunity and distraction which the season, now commencing, could supply. Foremost among these measures was, that he secured the alliance, offensive and defensive, of an eminent dowager—a kinswoman of his own. This was the Lady Octopa Hawker, a great power in society, and who, on the matrimonial war-path, first for her daughters and then for her nieces, was believed to have taken more scalps than any extant pursuer of men. Her ladyship had married off all her own near belongings; but the instincts of the conqueror were still keen within her, and she longed for new achievements. With hearty cordiality, then, she undertook the chaperonage and social supervision of Esme, whose personal attractions and dazzling prospects promised *éclat* to Lady Octopa herself, and a basis of operations wide enough for the ambition of a great strategist. She quite understood what Lord Germistoun wanted. There had been a foolish entanglement in the country, which still haunted the girl's fancy. Esme's settlement was therefore more than a matter of general expediency—it was urgent. Lady Octopa quite grasped the situation. Similar "cases" had been successfully manipulated by her before now; and she assured Lord Germistoun, confidently, that he might make his mind easy.

So Esme was launched into the vortex; and, under the system of Lady Octopa, with which his lordship consented not to interfere, she had every distraction and opportunity which London affords. It could not be said that she became the fashion; she was not mobbed and gazed at from chairs, hastily climbed as posts of observation, which are among the attentions now enjoyed, in this well-bred metropolis, by ladies who chance to be the rage of the hour. Neither by the style of her beauty nor by her manner was she at all likely to be, in this sense, the fashion; but she soon became the object of much interest, of some real devotion, and of considerable pursuit. To this she was indifferent, since all men but one were to her like shadows. But London was more endurable than Scotland and Italy had been, for the sway of Lady Octopa was less harassing than her father's sway—and Cosmo was in town.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Cosmo was in town; but we must go back a little, and trace the events which led to the circumstances under which he was there. When he left Scotland, seeking, in movement and rapid changes of scene, some distraction from grievous mental pain, he crossed the Channel, and, without purpose or programme, found himself presently at Marseilles; and thence, in the same hap-hazard way, went over to the island of Corsica. This he explored unrestingly, scaling the rugged heights of the Monte d'Oro and the Monte Rotondo, traversing the noble forests of Aitone and Vizzavona, crossing the island by that grand and unique route from Bastia to Ajaccio, and moving half round it, partly on foot, partly in the rough vehicles of that primitive land. His fare

was simple, his lodging rough, his physical exertions severe; he lived alone with nature, and amidst aspects of nature constantly changing but always noble; and soon, in a measure, recovering the equilibrium of thought which he was in quest of, he felt in a position to turn his face homeward, before the prescribed month had elapsed. At Marseilles he found letters awaiting him, and one from his father which induced him to continue his journey to England with all speed. The news it contained was entirely welcome and opportune, being to the effect that the sitting member for Puffboro' had, on visiting his constituents, found it expedient to reconsider his intention of "sticking to his post"—that he had now, in fact, taken steps to retire, and that the writ for a new election was to be issued immediately. Mr. Glencairn stated that, acting upon what his son had said to him some months before, he had gone down to the place himself, and set matters in train for Cosmo's candidature, and already done a little quiet canvassing on his behalf; but that his own personal appearance on the scene, and the issue of his address at the earliest moment possible, were necessary.

Cosmo telegraphed that he was on his way home, and lost so little time that, before thirty-six hours had elapsed, he was in the borough. Here awaiting him he found Mr. Hopper, whom, in consideration of a good many electioneering qualities, his father had sent down to "manage" matters.

"Come at last!—and most welcome, Captain Cosmo!" cried Hopper. "And now, since there is no time to lose, perhaps you would kindly throw an eye over this, and then we can send it to the printer at once. There were one or two points we were in doubt about, so couldn't issue it before your arrival." He produced a roll of paper.

"What is that?" asked Cosmo.

"The address, captain—your address."

"My address!—and you *thought* of issuing a statement of my principles without my sanction?"

"The committee thought of it, captain, and urged it on us, as we were, roughly speaking, in possession of your views; but we decided that it was not the right thing to do, and we didn't do it."

"It would have been a most reckless and un—"

"Exactly. It would. We felt that it would be so. We couldn't pledge ourselves on the 'Burials' question, you see. Mr. Buster, a strong Non-conformist, but a leading man here, goes for being buried in the parish church-yard, without what he calls 'any priestly abominations.'"

"Well?"

"Well, captain, we didn't know whether you mightn't insist, so to speak, on the 'abominations'; and, though we got a strong hint that if we could assure him that you would help him to be interred without them, it would, in fact, mean a good many votes, we daren't do it, captain—daren't do it; and didn't. Besides, it was clear that games were going on between the parties here, which I was only allowed half to see, and I felt that it was quite possible that Buster's votes were safe, without any pledge from you."

"It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether Mr. Buster is buried in the church-yard or in his cabbage-yard; but—"

"Clearly so, and naturally," said Hopper, taking out a pencil, and scrolling an addition to the address, which he read aloud as he wrote: "'Will advocate fullest concessions on this point—will be glad to see all Non-conformists buried—in the manner that may be most satisfactory to them.' There!—that ought to net Buster and his followers!"

"You are too hurried, Mr. Hopper; and if you think I am going to make pledges to catch votes, you are mistaken."

"Never dreamed of such a thing, sir! With a man of your mould, that would be out of the question. Quite."

"Then—well, let me look at this paper which is supposed to expound my principles."

"Roughly, captain; only *roughly*. There it is."

Cosmo ran his eye over it, murmuring aloud the principal heads: "'General support of the Conservative party—time-honored institutions—economy,' etc., etc.—'a jealous watchfulness over the efficiency of our postal system, especially as regards foreign and colonial mail-service—importance of maritime *nexus* between the hemispheres—friction of thought in an international sense—action and reaction—bonds of sympathy tightened—international pulse'—why, what on earth is all this?"

"Go on, captain—go on!"

"Urgent necessity for reform in oceanic mail-service—gross abuses in this department—for example, as to port selected in connection with mail-service between Great Britain and the grand republic of New Gotham—consider present state of things a scandal and a reproach, which no Government ought to tolerate, which no Conservative administration would dream of maintaining—if returned, would use every effort to promote governmental action in the matter—" Cosmo threw the paper down. "The whole thing," he said, is absolutely meaningless to me."

"For the moment, sir, no doubt it is; but it is full of meaning for the constituency, and that's the main point."

"Is it?"

"Well, in a sense. You see, captain, what the people in general here want is to get their port made the port for the Gotham mail-service instead of Dartboro', and what *we* want—that is to say, Mr. Glencairn and some of the leading inhabitants of the place—is to get the mail contract transferred from the 'Eureka Steam Navigation Company' to the 'Great Antipodal Steam Navigation Company,' of which they are principal share-holders, and whose ships already have their station here. Very well. You, captain, as your father's mouth-piece—"

"I will be no man's mouth-piece."

"I was wrong. You will be no man's mouth-piece—naturally not; but, having a son's sympathy in a father's interests, and knowing the utter inefficiency of the 'Eureka'—"

"I know nothing about it!"

"Oh, my dear captain, but it is notorious!"

"Well, well."

"Knowing the inefficiency of the 'Eureka,' and the complete organization of the 'Antipodal'—"

"Again you beg the question."

"Feeling sure, I should perhaps say, that any organization which, like the 'Antipodal,' enjoys

the direction of such men as your father, is certain to be complete, and therefore best adapted for the public service. Knowing and feeling this, and being aware that Puffboro' is nearer to New Gotham by twelve nautical miles, and to London by five statute miles, than Dartboro' is—you can scarcely hesitate to promise your support to the demand of Puffboro', when it asks to have the privilege of Dartboro', in this matter of the mails, transferred to it. The 'Eureka' contract expires in two years. The 'Eureka' and Dartboro' have had *their* innings and misused them. Turn about's fair play; why shouldn't Puffboro' and the 'Antipodal' have their innings next—particularly when that would advance the public interests?"

"But what has all this got to do with politics?"

Hopper held up his hands. "Politics, captain?—everything: it will settle the politics of this borough for a generation. You see they're a *little* bit hazy here *about* politics. The fact is, with a few exceptions, they don't, I suspect, care very much in reality about parties, except in so far as their own interests are concerned. They pretend to, of course, but I twig them. I twig them. Now Puffboro', with a Liberal member, has been trying to get justice from a Liberal Government. It has always failed. The Liberals have sacrificed it to Dartboro', which returns *two* Liberal members, and is a stronghold of the party. Very well. Now is the moment when Puffboro' sees its way to success by a change of front; for Conservatism is getting rapidly to the top, and is safe to be in power immediately. So what Puffboro' is saying to itself is this: 'If we support the Conservative ticket now, a Conservative Government might reasonably be expected to support us, at the expense of Dartboro' and Liberalism, when the contract expires; so, between ourselves'—here Mr. Hopper adapted his forefinger to his nose—"between ourselves, I think Puffboro' is inclined to support a Conservative candidate who will pledge himself to bring all pressure to bear in the direction of its wishes."

"What a disclosure of political immorality!"

"Well—in a sense; but there's another way to look at it, and that is, that the worthy folk here enjoy the advantage of having the public interest bound up with their own. The efficiency of international mail-service is no trifle; and if that is promoted with special advantage to the Puffboro' people, why, so much the better for them: but they and their member are entitled to feel that, in urging their private interests, they are working for the public good, and a Conservative Government which might recognize their services would be able to feel that they were granting a boon to the nation."

"Provided your statistics are correct."

"They are undeniably and demonstrably correct, Captain Cosmo."

"The real motives would continue equally small and sordid."

"My dear captain, how far would you go? Would you sacrifice the public interests to avoid the appearance of selfish motives? As for a Member of Parliament, he is bound to promote the interests of his constituency, where they don't clash with imperial interests; otherwise he is not their representative at all."

Cosmo bit his lip, and beat the ground impa-

tiently with his foot. "I detest," he said, "the appearance of a bargain in such a matter. I feel inclined to give up my candidature."

"But, captain, you will have to make no *bargain* at all. You will simply have to say, as every other member says, 'I will promote the interests of this borough in every way in which I conscientiously can.' That's not much to say, surely; and I think *that* will satisfy them. You see the Liberals can't promise to meet their views, because that would be promising to sacrifice more profitable supporters at Dartboro'."

"I shall make it quite clear to them that there is to be no *bargain* on my part. If they choose to say that my pressing the interests of this port is to be a *sine qua non*, or even a condition of their political support, I shall tell them that I won't take their political support on such terms."

"Quite! They won't say *that*."

"If, after hearing my views, they are satisfied with them, I can have no objection to say—of course, as a volunteered remark—that my best endeavors to promote their general interests will be at their disposal."

"To be sure. That's it, captain. That will nick it. Ha! ha!"

"But is there no feeling at all in the borough on *any* political question?"

"Well, there are the Non-conformists, who are always inclined to give trouble. *They* are the politicians; and they *talk*, I believe, of a contest. I don't think they're in earnest. At all events, a few fair words from you would quiet them. I shall know more about *them* in a few hours. As informed, up to date, my impression is, that their main political belief is that Puff-boro' is, by twelve nautical miles, nearer to New Gotham than Dartboro' is, and therefore, etc., etc. Now, captain, about the address."

"I won't allow a line of that preposterous production to go out in my name. I have the main points of an address in my head, and, if you will come back in an hour, I can promise to have it ready for you."

"Very well, sir. I'll go and see the committee in the mean time, and tell them you're come."

Accordingly Mr. Hopper betook himself to the leaders of the party, and, with a great many winks and frowns, explained, jocosely, the state of Cosmo's mind.

"The captain," he said, "is a philosopher, and has a conscience, and some other things that ain't very convenient at election times; and he kicks at the idea of making 'a bargain,' as he calls it, for his seat, about this port and contract business. But he'll be as right as a trivet, if you only manage him rightly. Now take this advice from me—that is, if you want him for your candidate—and you can't get anything like so good a man for *your* purposes as he would be, with his father at his back; take this advice from me—receive his programme, which is sure to be harmless, and accept him unconditionally as your candidate. Not a word about the steamboats. I'll guarantee that he'll do the right thing for the borough in that matter; I *can* guarantee it. I speak for his father, you know," added Hopper, with a wink which spoke volumes; "but if you press him for a pledge in his own direct words, he'll very likely throw you over altogether. Be contented with *my* pledge—that is to say, his father's—for him."

Then the committee, satisfied that an autocrat and a millionaire like old Glencairn would certainly be able to control his own son, agreed to this; and when Hopper had brought the address, they *did* formally accept Cosmo as their candidate, though some things in the address puzzled them, and might have strained their Conservatism if there had been any abstract politicians among them. The decision was conveyed to him by a deputation who, warned by Hopper, behaved with great discretion during the interview, keeping the steamboats out of view, and being politic enough (under the same inspiration) to suggest certain modifications of his political programme. Cosmo combated their objections with great earnestness, and, after a show of argument and reluctance, they abandoned their positions, and admitted that he was right. A public meeting was agreed upon for the following night, and the interview thus terminated to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned—these worthy politicians desiring to send up to Parliament, not so much an exponent of political philosophy as an article with a brand which made it marketable; and Cosmo delighted to find that the constituency was, after all, inspired by disinterested political principle.

The meeting, which took place as arranged, although it embraced the whole constituency, was not a very large affair, when all were told. There were no "lambos," no tumult, no sort of excitement. The fact was, Hopper had made good use of his time in the interval; he had "got at" no end of people; and the leaders of the various political sections, who were all either deep in the "Antipodal," or at least closely identified in some way with the maritime interests of the borough, had, that afternoon, come to a pretty fair understanding. In this, Cosmo's pledge—that is to say, the pledge vicariously offered for him by the ingenious Mr. Hopper—was an important factor; and Cosmo's brusque utterance about Mr. Buster's burial, manipulated into comfortable and comprehensive English by the same artist, was tendered and accepted as a negotiable security.

An air of placidity, then, characterized the assembly; for things had oozed out: it was pretty well understood that the wire-pullers had decided that there was to be no contest, and the wire-pullers being the great employers of labor and the fountains of local patronage, their decision was everything, or nearly so.

Thus, even when Mr. Buster, chief of the Non-conformist Radicals, passed into the room, looking very fierce and uncompromising; and when Mr. Batt, captain of the higher Liberal section, stalked gloomily up the hall, as if he, too, "meant blood," no sensation was produced; even among the most simple-minded of their followers the general sentiment was "Walker!" Nor could the frantic exertions of Mr. Hopper, who stood concealed behind the platform, clapping his hands and shouting "Bravo!" in a boisterous and infectious manner, warm the meeting into any enthusiasm, as Cosmo and his committee entered. Mr. Whorles (Conservative, and chairman of the "Antipodal") took the chair, and introduced the candidate as a gentleman of prodigious talent, and of a political creed so generous, enlightened, soundly constitutional, and what he might call philosophically expansive,

that he could not conceive any one of any shade of politics—not revolutionary—failing to recognize in Captain Glencairn a right, fit, and proper, etc., etc. "Captain Glencairn," he went on, "is well known as a brave soldier—brave as a lion, as the British lion—who has served his country, and bled for it, on many battle-fields—" (Here Cosmo made a sharp gesture of dissent.) "Well, perhaps not exactly bled for it—that is an accident beyond the captain's control—but served it with every other distinction. He is also known as an eminent scholar, as a capitalist himself, and the son of one of England's merchant princes. When I add that he has strong local interests—" (another strong gesture of dissent from Cosmo)—"seeing that his father has condescended to recognize that there is, in our town and port, a sphere for his cosmopolitan operations as a capitalist—when I add that he is already heart and soul a Puffboro' man" (frantic applause by Hopper and committee), "and that the rights and privileges dear to Puffboro' will be jealously safeguarded by him, I think I have said enough to recommend him to your cordial reception; and Captain Glencairn will now himself address you." When the vociferations of Hopper and his *claque* had been stilled, Cosmo proceeded to do so in a very effective manner. His handsome person and bearing produced a favorable impression, and, when he spoke, the charm of his voice and the grace of his language and intonation conciliated the audience, as such advantages always do, even when much that is thus musically conveyed is unintelligible to them.

He began by defining his position as a Conservative. He was devoted to the constitution, believing that its fundamental idea was in harmony with the genius of the British people. At the same time, he recognized that institutions require periodical modifications, so as to keep them abreast of changes and growths in the sentiments, conditions, and wants of the nation. He would therefore conserve the grand principle of political equilibrium which the constitution aimed at, by welcoming any changes in the method of its application which might from time to time become necessary, so as to guard the essential virtue of the principle from being obscured and hampered by accessories which had ceased to be consistent with the developed conditions of the natural life.

On the other hand, he would resist changes dictated merely by the restlessness of parties, and the selfish ambition of leaders, just as he would oppose a policy of obstruction which had no higher motive than the apathy of a party or its selfish timidity. In this sense he was a Conservative, and on these general principles he would act with the Conservative party, while they were animated by them.

He looked upon class jealousies as grand impediments to national prosperity. He was against all legislation that would sacrifice the interests of one class to those of another. Interests must, more or less, come into collision from time to time; and, if equilibrium were to be maintained, mutual concessions and compromises must be made. It was the duty of statesmen, holding the balance evenly between classes, to direct and formulate these compromises, and, in the interests of the constitution, to provide compensations by legislation, earnestly considered and wisely timed.

We had recently passed through a period of much legislation. Many great questions had been settled, or put in the way of settlement. He would not pretend that, in all cases, he approved of the methods employed to settle them; but retrogression was foreign to our political usage, and he thought it was the duty of patriotic politicians to accept loyally what the nation had adopted, and to promote subsidiary legislation, so as to give it the healthiest developments.

It was with the present we had to do—the actually existing state of things—and also with the shaping of the future. The past was dead and gone; and though we might lament many past things, as we mourned dead friends, yet in neither case ought we to suffer sentiment to blind us to the real work and duty of life, which lay in the present, and in recognizing what the present calls us to do, and in doing it.

As a case in point, he would observe that great power had passed into the hands of the lower sections of society by the extension of the franchise. For his own part, he had always felt that, in any such readjustment, the claims of intelligence ought to have been directly considered. As it was, there was no direct mechanical check on the preponderating influence of uneducated opinion. But the remedy he would seek for this lay, not in reaction, but in energetically perfecting the system of national education, which we had been far too tardy in inaugurating.

Cosmo then went on to indicate how his general principles would direct his action in reference to certain special topics, such as taxation, pauperism, local self-government, our military and naval systems, and the Church. With regard to the last, he avowed himself a firm supporter of the Establishment principle, and a faithful member of the Church of England, though he admitted that it required reform in several respects which he named and discussed. He then returned to the question of education, into which he went very minutely, and elaborated a scheme for the wide diffusion of technical instruction and training. He said that most burning party questions had been settled for the moment, and that the country should now give its very earnest attention to this question of education, and to another which, almost as greatly, and more immediately, affected the national welfare—viz., that of the relations between capital and labor. If there were neglect of these supreme questions, or feebleness in dealing with them, at this critical time, the period of our national decline would very soon commence.

As methods of adjusting disputes, he regarded strikes and lock-outs as unworthy of a civilized age. They were wasting the industrial life of the nation, paralyzing capital, alienating trade, and leading the country to poverty and ruin. There was an inexorable limit to the concessions of capital, placed at the point where its employment ceased to yield profit. Driven beyond that, it must withdraw altogether, taking trade and employment with it, and leaving labor to starve. Capitalists were, of course, just as selfish as other men, and might be expected to postpone the interests of others to their own; they, however, must know better than their employes where this point, separating profit and loss, lay. On the other hand, the employes, naturally looking to their own interests exclusively, might be expect-

ed to doubt the assurances of the capitalists, even when they truly asserted that the point had been reached, and so to press capital beyond what it was able to bear. Here, then, in mutual distrust, and in an antagonism of interests which was artificial, lay the source of perpetual deadlocks.

Lock-outs might sometimes be a selfish expedient, sometimes a simple necessity; and the same might be said of strikes. Who, then, was to decide in the matter? Private arbitration had proved ineffectual. The crisis was a grave one, and he was prepared to submit to a grave remedy. He would, in some form or other, make the State practically the arbitrator, and he would enforce its decisions by law. He was not prepared to suggest all the details of such an interference; but the outline of a scheme had occurred to him, according to which the interposition of the State would make disputes impossible. It appeared to him that, as the Bank of England indicated the rate of interest, from time to time, at the discretion of the directors; so the market-price of labor, in all the great industries, might be periodically struck by a Government Board, sitting in permanence, and armed with a final authority which the Bank of England did not possess. Subordinate district boards might supply to the central board the local knowledge which would enable them to adapt their enactments to the varying conditions of the districts.

This might be called crude and fanciful. Perhaps it was so; perhaps, at the same time, it might contain the germ of a workable scheme. It might be said that this was an unjustifiable interference with liberty of contract. To this he would reply that, in the gravest disturbances of order, liberty, by a natural law, was sacrificed to self-preservation. Society selected the less of two evils, and turned to despotism to save it from anarchy.

He applied the analogy, and justified the arbitrariness of his proposal on exactly the same principle—by appealing to the anarchical state of things which it was intended to correct. It was the less of two evils, which had no other alternative, apparently. Every man who turned his attention to public affairs ought to consider this grave problem, and if every one did so, a solution would soon be discovered. As to the expense of carrying out such a system as he had indicated, that would, at worst, be trifling compared with the incalculable loss involved in the present state of things. With this Cosmo concluded his address, which had the faintest possible interest or meaning for the great majority of his audience, who, however, applauded vigorously when he sat down.

The political lore of the majority was confined to certain cries and catch-words, and to those parrot-phrases with which that afflictive institution—"Parliament-out-of-session"—fatigues the public ear. But in Cosmo's speech there was no one of this sort to start the divine utterances of the *vox populi* for praise or blame. The eyes of the people, therefore, rested for inspiration on their leaders, who all occupied conspicuous seats. The Conservatives eyed Mr. Whorkles; the Liberals watched Mr. Batt—dock-proprietor first, and Liberal afterward; while the ultra-Radicals took their time from Mr. Buster, between whose ravages and the Established Church, his inter-

ests, as a ship-chandler, acted, for the present, as a sort of breakwater.

As Cosmo's speech proceeded, the approval of Mr. Whorkles and his following became more and more marked.

Mr. Batt, on the other hand, gradually exchanged an air of armed neutrality for one of allayed apprehension, which was duly reflected in the quietness of his rank and file; while the Non-conformists, under the inspiration of Mr. Buster, who had distinctly nodded his head once or twice in approval of Cosmo's sentiments, confined their active demonstrations to a little gentle howling when Cosmo declared himself for the Established Church. The speech was a great success in this sense, at least, that it enabled Whorkles, Batt, and Buster to carry out their secret triple alliance, which had for its aim the deliberate transfer of the constituency to the Conservative side, for considerations above explained. If Cosmo had turned out to be too pronounced in his opinions—a Tory, in fact—Batt and Buster could scarcely have ventured even to remain neutral; but, as it was, they felt that his views might conciliate a variety of creeds, and were advanced in such a way as to rouse no partisan animosities: and this impression was exchanged between them in furtive glances of congratulation. A show of opposition was, however, necessary, and it was duly forth-coming when a resolution affirming Cosmo's fitness had been moved. Then, after Mr. Batt had received an affirmative signal from Mr. Whorkles, in answer to a secret note which asked, "May I risk a question on the assimilation of the franchise?" and after Mr. Whorkles had sent a secret note to Mr. Buster, which said, "Go it on the Burial question: he'll fit you, and none of us mind"—Mr. Batt rose and said that there was, of course, a good deal in what Captain Glencairn had said which he could not pretend to hold with; still, there was a good deal which, coming from a Conservative, it surprised him, in an agreeable sense, to hear. Considerable breadth of view was indicated in the captain's professions, and he trusted they were not mere professions. As a very simple test of his sincerity in advocating equilibrium and justice, he would put to the candidate one question—Was he prepared to assimilate the franchise in boroughs and counties, and so relieve the agricultural population from a scandalous injustice?

Cosmo at once replied that he cordially assented to the principle of assimilation, though there were certain questions connected with carrying it out upon which his mind was not made up.

Whereupon Mr. Batt promptly sat down, after stating that the admission of the principle was satisfactory to him and creditable to Cosmo, and that he was not prepared to move a counter-resolution.

Then Mr. Buster, with a well-feigned air of expecting no satisfaction, stated that, without criticising the speech in detail, he would take exception to one passage in it, which implied that there were no burning questions exercising the public mind at present. He denied that *in toto*. The grievances of Non-conformists were a burning question—ay, a question that was burning its way into the public conscience. Foremost among these, the great question of the day was that known as the "Burials" question.

Now, would the candidate's even-handed justice extend relief to Dissenters in that respect?

Cosmo replied that, as he had before said, he was a faithful Churchman; but he, for one, could see no disloyalty to the Church in desiring to admit Dissenters to the privilege which they desired. He knew that it was largely held by Churchmen that to give way on this point was to surrender an outwork protecting the Church itself; but he was soldier enough to know that it was bad tactics to waste strength upon untenable outworks; and an outwork which rested upon what he ventured to think was foolish prejudice and injustice was both weak and indefensible. He would resist with all his might any unjust encroachments upon the Church; but, both as a matter of right and of expediency, he was heartily for making the concession in question. Whereupon Mr. Buster, glancing triumphantly at his disciples, remarked that half a loaf was better than no bread; and that, as no other candidate was before the meeting, he, like Mr. Batt, would refrain for the present from moving a counter-resolution, and so sat down. The motion was then put to the meeting; and a respectable forest of hands being held up in its favor, though Batt, Buster & Co. of course remained neutral, Cosmo was declared to be unanimously found "a fit and proper person."

At the nomination, a few days after, no opposition was offered; and Cosmo was elected, believing, in the guilelessness of his heart, that he owed his return to the electors' sympathy with the unselfishness and even-handed justice which illustrated his political creed. The steamboats had been carefully kept in the background. "No pledges! no bargains! I am free as air! and it is a very worthy constituency!" Thus he congratulated himself, innocent of the fact that Hopper had pledged him to Whorkles, and that Whorkles had purchased Batt and the Liberals with the same pledge, and managed Buster and the Radicals with it and other contrivances, and that the whole constituency, more or less, looked upon him simply as the *coupon* of a Conservative bond, in which they had invested, and which they hoped a Conservative Government would honor when it was presented for payment.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Cosmo's electioneering proceedings began, as we have seen, a few weeks after his flight from Scotland, and before November commenced he wrote himself M.P. Some time must therefore elapse before his new duties would give him that daily employment and occasional excitement which are salutary in cases like his. His Continental raid, however, followed by the bustle and success at Puffboro', had done much for him, keeping him free from those mists of despondency which are apt to settle on the mind when sorrow assails a merely contemplative life; and, while the impetus was still on him, he returned with vigor to political study. He had no intention of becoming a Parliamentary specialist—taking up a question and hammering away at it, so as to keep his name before the public, as the manner of some is. But recognizing that want of concentration had hitherto rendered his powers

unproductive, he devoted his earnest attention to one or two political problems which appeared to him to be already grave, and likely to be recognized as such in the near future. And thus he passed the remainder of the recess.

His love was deep and true as ever, but he kept it under strong control; and, far more successfully now than heretofore, he combated those accessions of reverie which paralyze intellectual vigor. It was no longer a time for dreams. His love had passed from the region of dreams, and, uniting itself in the noblest way with the realities of his life, had introduced him at last to the sphere of Duty. Esmé was his guiding star and guardian angel: she had led him to that sphere, and in it he must not dream, but work, for Duty's sake and hers. At times, indeed, the sense of their separation would obtrude itself almost overwhelmingly—so cruelly complete it seemed—grieving him for her even more than for himself, though he could not dream of the utter desolation of her present lot. But constantly her guardian-angel words came back to him—"Say to yourself that I am standing beside you, trying to help you with my love and my prayers;" and from the words he took heart and comfort for them both. He went little into society, but he was often cheered by visits from Phil Denwick (now sitting at the feet of Mr. Hopper), which were ever welcome; for Phil was the most sanguine and sympathetic of confidants, and, besides, the only one with whom he could speak of Esmé. The only tidings he had had of her were by a letter from Tom Wyedale, written after he had seen her at Rome; and in which, with kindly intent, he made much of the marvellous interest she had evinced in hearing of his doings. "I am now, however, under the ban myself," he said, "and I suspect it is for sake's sake. Never mind! we shall both live to out-flank the old gentleman. By-the-bye, he was pretty strong about your Puffboro' speech, which he had read, and described it as 'distinctly sinister.' For this, however, you will easily console yourself, when I tell you that Miss Douglas spoke of it with an enthusiasm which made her eyes sparkle and her cheek flush. Oh, you lucky dog!" And, indeed, Cosmo for the moment felt himself to be the happiest and most fortunate of men. That she should admire the speech itself was much; but his lover's instinct told him that her eyes had sparkled because she had accepted it as a witness of his loyalty to her, and of all his pledges; and *that* was happiness indeed, for it meant *her* happiness—and caused by him.

Poor souls! there was but little comfort for them at this cheerless time! No wonder they made much of such small mercies as came their way.

Thus Cosmo passed the months gravely, and even sadly, but guarded from morbid melancholy by purpose, labor, and hope. As for Esmé, we have seen what her sad history was during the section of time which, for the purposes of our narrative, may be considered to have terminated with the opening of Parliament. At that time there was for each, in a certain sense, a new point of departure. For about that time the Germistounes returned to London, and, while Cosmo took his seat in the House and inaugurated a career which he hoped might lead him to Esmé, she, under the pilotage of Lady Octopa, was em-

backed on a new course which was intended, effectually and finally, to separate her from Cosmo. Henceforth, indeed, life had more alleviations for both; but Cosmo had still the best of it. The man usually has in such cases. Working is better than weeping; and while the woman, as a rule, has to drift at the mercy of the chapter of accidents or of the caprice or authority of others, powerless to shape her own course, the man can swim, it may be, against a current so strong as, for the moment, to make progress imperceptible, but still with the great consolation of a conscious exercise of will and effort to reach the point aspired at. Cosmo then, with his definite work tending in some degree at least in that direction, had the best of it.

But life in the vortex of society—that kaleidoscopic life, with its swiftly succeeding transformations, episodes, and exigencies—forces distraction on the saddest heart; and Esme, not sadder than she had been in Italy, had here the distraction which was lacking there.

The weeks rolled on; the antipastoral season was in such full swing as Lent permits. Cosmo's voice had not yet been heard in the House. Searching constantly in the Parliamentary reports, Esme only found his name in the division lists, or, now and then, in connection with a petition embodying some parochial aspiration on the part of Puffblum. On the other hand, Lady Octopu had scored no success; for though Lord Ribston was by this time off in his yacht, to avenge on the bodies of hours and Arctic sea fowl the prompt refusal with which Esme had met an early proposal from him, her ladyship could not credit herself with the finish of an affair in which she had not started.

Esme and Cosmo had never met. Each had had a fleeting glimpse of the other, when the other was unaware, but they had not met eye to eye. Esme longed, yet feared, to meet him—longed to hear his voice again, even though his words were not for her; yet feared a *rencontre* in society, not knowing how she might control herself, or be able to support the stranger's part which she must play. If they met in the streets, even, she did not know what she should do. Might she bow? She was pledged not to communicate with him, and it was a nice question whether to bow were "to communicate." It is pretty obvious how love's casuistry would have settled this question had the opportunity occurred; but the opportunity did not occur. Nor was it strange; for, in all the world, there is no place where two people are less likely to meet than in London, when it is the object of one to avoid a meeting. And this was Cosmo's object. He foresaw nifty evil results for them both, and even for their eventual hopes, should there be a risk of their meeting, if only occasionally, in society; and so, though his longing was great, to the full, as hers, he exercised stern self-control, and excused himself from all such engagements as seemed likely to lead to it.

Esme's longing to see him grew and grew; even to hear him spoken about would be something; and to hear him spoken about in connection with some hopeful achievement would be the best of all. But this was denied her. She began to feel that they might as well be the inhabitants of separate planets; and, even in the whirl which her chaperon concocted for her, there were

times when she could not struggle with utter despondency. It was during one of these sad crises that Lady Octopu, having a nephew with a military grievance which was to be incidentally ventilated by some one during the discussion on the Army Estimates, proposed to take Esme to the House of Commons one evening; and Esme, thinking that she might thus have a chance of seeing Cosmo, unseen herself, and with no violation of her compact, eagerly assented; and they went.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

They were well placed in the gallery; and as the House had not yet gone into committee, the benches were still pretty empty. Esme, who had never been there before, watched the gradual entrance of the members with interest. She was surveying the *ensemble* of the House with that sense of disappointment which usually accompanies a first visit to the greatest legislative assembly in the world—thinking, indeed, that it was the most "extraordinary-ordinary" looking assemblage she had ever seen—when her view changed in an instant, and a glory came over the whole place, as Cosmo entered. He looked pale and fatigued, but his handsome face did not lose in interest by that; and his air was as full of spirit and dignity as of old. He entered alone, and Lady Octopu remarked him.

"Do you know who he is?" she inquired, turning to Esme, whose heart was beating very quick.

"Yes," she said, with an effort. "Mr. Glencairn."

"Oh yes! one of the new members. I forget what he sits for. Ah! he goes to the right side, at all events. I thought he would. He is very good-looking. Do you know him?"

"Yes—no. We met him abroad, and—and in the Highlands."

"There is really something most distinguished and interesting in his appearance—very much so indeed!" said Lady Octopu (who had an eye for a handsome man), as she inspected the young member through her glass. "Is he rich? Is he a *parti*? Who is he?" she continued.

"I believe he is rich," faltered Esme, "but I cannot give you any particulars about him;" and then she went on hurriedly to inquire who was "that very fat man—just come in—with his hands in his pockets?"

"Oh! I should be sorry to know; probably one of the trades-union members. He looks quite the rattener. An odious wretch! But," turning her eyes again to Cosmo, "what a delightful creature Mr.—what is his name? Ah, yes!—Mr. Glencairn looks! I declare I am quite smitten. We must find out all about him."

It was sweet to Esme to hear her lover appreciated for once; but it was not unmingled sweetness; for her ladyship's appreciation was embarrassing for the moment, and her researches might lead to awkward results. Lord Gormistonie, in informing her that there had been "a foolish entanglement" in the country, had not, of course, divulged the name of the entangler.

Indulgence went sleepily on for a time; a good many questions were asked and answered or evaded, displaying the usual amount of droll an-

tithes in their subjects, and at last the House went into supply on the Army Estimates.

The Secretary for War made his statement, in the tone of mingled jubilation, apology, and re-primand which has been sometimes known to characterize such deliverances.

He must admit, he said, that the estimates were large, but they showed no material advance on the estimates of right honorable gentlemen opposite; indeed, any trifling advance there might be was entirely due to the action of those right honorable gentlemen when in office.

The army estimates must always be large in this country; but he ventured to assert that this country would never grudge them, provided they secured an efficiency in the service, which he was prepared to show that it at present displayed.

He would admit that at the moment there was a certain difficulty in obtaining recruits; but if trade entered on the period of depression which was confidently anticipated, that difficulty, they might hope, would disappear; and the difficulty was in no respect greater than it had been during the administration of right honorable gentlemen opposite, and the army was notoriously held in an esteem by the nation which it had not enjoyed under them. The quality of our soldiers was much canvassed; but he could not admit that the harsh view occasionally taken of them was just. They were young—that was true; perhaps too young—that was a matter of opinion; but that was a fault which tended to correct itself from the nature of things; and, in any case, the average of the army, in this respect, was as high as it had been when right honorable gentlemen opposite held power.

As for the *physique* of the troops, an American general, whom he had met last week at a Guildhall banquet, told him that he had recently lunched with the general commanding at Aldershot, and afterwards inspected the division there, when the impression he carried away was that the Aldershot soldier was *twice* the size of the American soldier. Now, making every allowance for the national propensity of Americans to under-rate what belonged to themselves, he thought the committee would find, in the opinion of this eminent authority, a satisfactory answer to strictures which had been passed upon the *physique* of our troops. Of course, it might be better—he was not going to deny that—but the improved conditions of agricultural life impeded recruiting in rural districts, and to some extent forced us rather to depend upon the urban population, which was, perhaps, more remarkable for mental activity than great bodily vigor. After all, a robust body was not everything; but, be that as it might, he was glad to believe that, under the control of right honorable gentlemen opposite, the *physique* of the army had been very much beneath its present standard.

With regard to desertion, they had certainly to deplore a rather high figure. Still, it might be worse; and he expected much from the abolition of the infamous practice of branding, by which the deserter had formerly been identified. That abolition was a distinct challenge to the chivalrous nature of British soldiers, which, when they had had time to understand it, they would not be slow to answer, by remaining true to the colors, in enhanced numbers. An honorable gentleman said "Oh!" but he, for one, was prepared

to express his entire confidence in the chivalrous nature of the British soldier. Well, now, too much was made of this desertion, which evidenced youthful levity and impatience of restraint, rather than a disloyalty which would display itself before the enemy. What he said was, "Bring them before the enemy, and then there would be no desertion." It was all very well for honorable members opposite to cry, "Find them first!" but twenty years ago the proportion of deserters was nearly as high as at present, and it would be in the recollection of the committee that at that time right honorable gentlemen opposite were the advisers of her Majesty.

Our reserve was steadily increasing, and our prospects were altogether hopeful in that respect. It had swelled this year by the respectable increment of three hundred and seventy men, and he called that hopeful. At the close of the century it would amount to no less than fifty thousand men, which he ventured to think was considerable. An honorable and gallant gentleman laughed, but he would tell him that if he thought that result tardy and unsatisfactory, he for one did not agree with him. If it were so, however, who, he should like to know, was to blame? Why, who but honorable and gallant gentlemen—members of this House—who systematically impeded military reform, and who, he felt bound to say, as a rule, supported the policy of right honorable gentlemen opposite.

And so the right honorable gentleman went on, in a strain which some members, still sitting in the House, may remember to have been not unusual—making the best of a bad business, asserting that it was not bad, or if bad, better, or at least not worse, than it had been under the sway of political opponents, and painting the future in glowing colors. The impression sought, and with some success, to be left upon a House—which had no sort of wish to see disagreeable truths, and dealt frankly with a difficult but vital question—being, that things were jogging on very well—a little expensively, but still very well; and that if there were any defects in the working of the system, these were due to the immense load of difficulties bequeathed by right honorable gentlemen opposite to the existing administration, who could not have coped with them at all but for the extraordinary energy and manhood which they possessed. Collins, in fact, was the friend—not Short.

There was, we may be sure, plenty of loud cheering when the right honorable gentleman sat down, smiling, and awaited the criticism of honorable, and gallant, and other porcupines opposite. These were to the front, as in duty bound, and the committee were favored with a considerable diversity of military speculation, theory, argument, anecdote, and sarcasm, notable among which were an elaborate attack upon the existing tactical cult, delivered by a stock-broker, and the remark by an Irish major, that he thoroughly endorsed the right honorable gentleman's statement as to the great esteem in which the army was now held by the nation; as a striking proof of which, he begged to adduce the case of a man whose martial zeal had recently induced him to enlist in ten regiments on one day. The only pity, he added, was that the fine fellow's admiration for them all had been too impartial to let him join any one of them, so that this sort of

zeal was not as profitable as could be wished; and it seemed that, though you might manufacture a man out of nine tailors, you could not be sure of getting one soldier out of ten recruits.

Cosmo sat with his head resting on his hand, so that his face was concealed, and Esmè, beginning to feel somewhat wearied by all this prosing, sat back to rest, a little absently, so that some portion of the House was out of her view. Presently there was a short lull in the speechifying, and then silence was broken by sounds which recalled her, with a beating heart, from her temporary reverie. Lady Octopa looked quickly round.

"Esmè," she said, "you must not sleep; my hero is going to speak."

The caution was quite unnecessary. Esmè was already sitting up, breathless, motionless, with all her eyes fixed upon *her* hero—her beloved—whose hour, she said to herself, had at last come. What music his voice had for her, as, with a slight tremble in it, but with an air of modest self-possession, he entered on the terrible ordeal of a maiden speech! Apparently the House, to some extent, shared her feeling, for there was rather an unusual silence after he had completed his first sentences, in which he made a graceful apology for so early an intrusion on their attention, which he could only justify by appealing to some little practical knowledge of a profession which had been his own, and some little study and observation of the working of Continental military systems. The House, besides being affected, like other assemblies, by grace of manner and diction, and, above all things, by the charm of voice, always gives a generous hearing to all beginners who do not attempt to take it by storm, and Cosmo's manly but respectful bearing, combined with these other personal advantages, procured ready applause for his apology, and bespoke favorable attention for what he had to say.

He wished, he said, to make a few comments upon the right honorable gentleman's statements with regard to recruiting and desertion. The two questions were bound together by the direct relation of cause and effect, and he impeached our present system of recruiting as essentially responsible for the enormous amount of desertion from the ranks which took place. The right honorable gentleman suggested remedial measures, but he ventured to submit that no practicable improvements in the conditions of military life which were superinduced upon the present system would have any effect in correcting the evil. To have a healthy tree you must have a sound root. There was only one remedial measure, and that was, to change the principle upon which our method of obtaining soldiers at present rested. Desertion was not the most serious evil which resulted from our present system, though it was a very clear evidence of its unsoundness. It pointed, by its enormous proportions, to the fact that our soldiers were drawn, in an alarming degree, from the most worthless element of our population; and it was only by altering our system of recruiting that we could escape from so deplorable a state of things. It was no argument to say that, under the same system, our safety and renown had been upheld in former times. Times had changed, the conditions of national life had altered—notably in the greater concentration of the population in

towns; and these changes, which had visibly affected the whole national character, had unquestionably, and gravely, deteriorated both the *morale* and the *physique* of the class with whom the recruiter had mainly to do. There was scarcely a point of resemblance between the soldier of to-day and the soldiers who fought in the Peninsular war. The desertion alone showed that we were dealing largely with a class morally worthless; and that it was physically worthless, or at least unworthy, was proved by the wretched standard of size exacted, by the reports of medical men, and even by the cursory observation of any one who chose to look at our troops with eyes which really desired to see the truth.

The men displayed, in a large degree, the imperfections of a stunted race—that was to say, of a race intended by nature to be stalwart, but whose proportions had been shrivelled by the results of artificial and unhealthy life, hereditarily transmitted. There was no stamina in such men. Our present system, then, tended to give us men morally and physically worthless—a rotten plank on which to rest the national honor and safety; and, as time went on, the evil tendencies of the system would progressively develop themselves. But did it give us enough even of such men as we possessed? It did not. The matter stood thus: In times of average prosperity, it was notoriously almost impossible to keep the army up to its strength. When trade was very dull, a rush was made to the service. Little was said about the deficit; much was made of the plethora; it was obtruded, so as to suggest that it represented the average state of things. The most inferior men were, of course, the first to be thrown out of employment, and these were the men who made the rush. It seemed to follow from this, that it was only when trade languished that we could get even a numerically sufficient force to protect the interests of trade.

If the system were insufficient in time of peace, in time of war it could only be made to work in a most inefficient way, and at a ruinous expense. In a war of any duration, he would venture to predict its total collapse. During the Crimean war, enormous bounties had to be offered to enable us to fill gaps in our ranks with the most wretched material; and even that expedient could only be made to work by resorting to volunteering from the embodied militia, which involved the expense of a double machinery, and forced us, to some extent, to pay twice over for our soldiers. Even this rich country, if it were involved in a protracted war, could not afford to pay at such rates, even for soldiers vastly superior to those which the system would supply. What, then, would be the result? Why, a radical change of system in time of war, when it would be effected at the greatest risk and disadvantage.

This was what the voluntary system did for us; and he could not anticipate any improvement from the introduction of a shorter term of service. When the "ten-years" Act came into force, a deterioration in the class of men who enlisted was very soon visible, and he was not aware that any increased facility in obtaining recruits was experienced. The full effects of that Act began to be felt during the Crimean war, and we had never been able to get the same stamp of soldiers since that time. As for the reserve which might be created under a short-ser-

vice system, even if the most sanguine anticipations were fulfilled, the results would still be insufficient, and afford no satisfactory compensation for the other disadvantages of the system, among which was the grave one that it would give us nothing but raw and inexperienced non-commissioned officers. At the present moment we had practically almost nothing to fall back upon. The country dwelt with vague complacency on the Volunteers. They were a noble force, of which we did well to be proud, but they did not constitute a *reserve* at all. They were an independent force—applicable to special duties, and valuable in their own sphere; but they were not homogeneous with the army, and could not be associated with it as a reserve, in the proper acceptance of the term.

This was what was done for us by the present system, which appeared to him to have few redeeming points. It was only made to work at all by the splendid qualities of the officers, who were equal in all, and superior in many respects, to the officers of any other army.

The voluntary system used to be held up as a subject for national glorification. "Our soldiers are not *compelled* to be soldiers," it was said, boastfully. Why, then, did they enter the army? From chivalrous patriotism, and a noble ambition for renown? If that were so, it was at least a little remarkable that these high qualities should be found only in the dregs of our society. No: the voluntary system was the reverse of glorious; it degraded the profession of arms by placing it in competition—as a matter of money—with other trades, and further degraded it by forcing it to compete on such terms that it could only secure the *residuum* of the labor market. In his humble opinion, the voluntary system was no longer suited to the altered conditions of the country; and besides, the country, since it formed part of the European system, could not afford, notwithstanding its insular advantage, altogether to vary its usages from those of neighboring nations, and certainly not where a violent variation involved national risk.

In these words he indicated the direction in which he would seek a remedy; but he felt that he had already too long occupied the attention of the House, and he would not presume to enter upon the details of any scheme which might have occurred to him. The House, however, taken with Cosmo's manner, good voice, and fluent delivery, and perhaps a little by the unusually frank manner in which, as a "military member," he dealt with so sacred a subject, encouraged him to go on and propound his views, which he did with much modesty, merely submitting his scheme as a sort of outline of what might contain some elements of a practicable system.

The House, he said, must be prepared to listen to a word at which the country had been carefully taught to shudder, and that was "conscription." That was the vital principle of his scheme. If it were adopted, he ventured to think that our difficulties would be at an end; and, with our vast population, it might be applied in such a way as to involve small individual hardship and small disorganization of the industry and trade of the country, even if it were desired to have a very large army at disposal. Situated as this country was, it would be necessary to have a dual system, retaining, in regard

to India, that which at present existed, under certain modifications; but to this he would return presently. Briefly, the system which he would introduce would combine, with some elements of our own, some elements borrowed from the German and Swiss systems.

He would make the whole male population, theoretically, liable to military service, between the ages of nineteen and forty. This wide area of liability would afford full scope for exemptions, and the interests of the higher classes might be further studied by recognizing in our organization the German "volunteer" or "one-year-man" system. With regard to the ages to be affected by the first incidence of the conscription, that question involved many complex considerations as to population and so forth, and he would not be expected to settle it off-hand but, as a mere suggestion, he would put the ages at between nineteen and twenty-three.

The army would be for home service exclusively in time of peace; for general service in time of war or grave national exigency.

Every conscript drawn would be sent to one of a number of training centres, and would remain there under permanent staffs of highly skilled instructors until a high degree of efficiency had been attained.

From each batch of trained conscripts a second selection would be made by lot. Those thus selected would be liable to three years' continuous service with the colors, in camp or garrison at home. The remainder would be dismissed to civil life, being only required to attend an annual training of ten days, and occasionally (in certain categories) certain more extended manœuvres during their period of service.

There would, no doubt, be many difficulties during the process of transition from the old to the new system, and provisional regulations would have to be made as to the incidence of the earlier conscriptions, so that it should not bear too unevenly upon the youngest men. But, when the system was developed, it would work automatically in distributing its pressure with perfect equitableness. The number of continuous-service-men need not, under the altered conditions, be nearly so great as that of the force now garrisoning the kingdom; and it might progressively diminish as the development of the system gave a constantly increasing *potential* army—that was to say, of soldiers not with the colors, of men engaged in all the avocations of civil life, but trained and fit for service in times of exigency; and, with regard to these men, there might be another class of categories of exemption.

He then went rapidly into some of the more important details of the scheme, of which this was a rough outline, repeating, finally, that it necessarily involved a dual system; for that, in regard to India, the voluntary system must be retained—corrected, however, by reverting to the old period of service for which soldiers specially engaged for that country were enlisted; the expense of this force to fall, of course, exclusively upon the Indian Government, its depots to be associated with the territorial army at home, and its officers to be interchangeable with those of that force.

He would encourage the Colonies in every way to adopt an organization similar to that of the proposed army for home service; and the

only difficulty remaining would be with regard to the garrisons of Malta and Gibraltar, which might, however, be met by associating them with the Indian organization, from which it might also be advisable to borrow for each of the considerable colonies a model corps, to serve as a standard of efficiency, and a living symbol of the imperial connection. The expenses under the latter heads would be a matter for equitable arrangement with the Indian and Colonial Governments.

As to the comparative expense of the proposed and the present systems, they must remember that under the former the militia would be abolished, and the volunteers would be unnecessary, and perhaps incompatible with it; and he believed that the *direct* saving, at least, which it would effect would be very great.

In a few sentences Cosmo thus placed his scheme before the House, and concluded as follows:

"There may be fallacies and flaws in the principle and in the details of such a scheme; but I venture to think that it has these merits: that, with the smallest possible hardship to the individual, with the smallest possible injury to productive industry, and at a reduction of *direct* expense, it would give us a force large enough, and extensible enough, and strong enough, to place this country in a position of power and impregnability which it has never before enjoyed—not even during the period when the rest of Europe was less menacing and less aggressive, from being less armed. For it would not merely give us the advantage of adequate numbers; it would yield quality as well as quantity; it would fill the ranks of the army with the flower instead of the weeds of the population, giving us a rank and file worthy of the officers, who, as a class, possess every quality which is most nobly typical of the English race. I fear I shall be met with the cry, 'Conscription! the people will never stand that.' Change the name, then, and call it 'consecration.' Don't tell the people that they will never stand it. If you think it is right, tell them that they *must* stand it. Tell them that the men they have elected to govern them know that it is for the country's good, and they *will* stand it, if they see you are in earnest. If you are afraid to do this—afraid of what?—afraid of compromising party interests?—afraid of responsibility? It can scarcely be anything else. Well, then, if you prefer party to patriotism, you are unfit to rule; and, as to responsibility, it is possible to reign without governing, but it is impossible to govern if you shrink from all initiative and all control of public opinion."

The concluding apostrophe was addressed neither to one party nor to another, but generally to the Legislature. Those who sat on the same side with Cosmo, however, gave it, of course, a party signification, and cheered vociferously, though probably the main propositions of the speech were unpalatable to the majority of the cheerers. The results, however, as far as Cosmo was concerned, were highly satisfactory, the cheers of the party being added to the cheers of those who generously recognized the merits of a new speaker, and of those who, in various parts of the House, sympathized with military reform in general, and with any assault on the existing state of things military. So that when Cosmo

sat down, though he had somewhat strained the usages of the House, it was amidst strong manifestations of general applause. We have seen that, in the old period of his hesitations, he asked himself this question:

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

And, no doubt, to the vast majority of his audience, on this occasion, the quotation would have sounded apposite; but he was fluent, musical, gentleman-like, and spoke with an air of thinking earnestly about his subject, and not about himself at all. Hence these cheers. A combination of circumstances had made his maiden speech a signal success.

"Capital! I like him!" said Lady Octopa. "He is very handsome, and seems to be so deliciously in earnest. I like him! My dear child, what is the matter?"

The cheers had been too much for poor Esmé. Her face was pale, and her eyes were full of tears. She murmured that the heat was overpowering, and that she would like to go; and Lady Octopa kindly consented to leave, with the tale of her martial kinsman's grievances unheard.

There was a considerable fuss in the papers next morning about the speech. It was approved of very warily by a very few; it was assailed by most from opposite points of the compass: this organ described it as despotic and arbitrary—that organ stigmatized it as democratic and revolutionary; but they nearly all agreed in the fine old, imperviously crusted objection—it involved a principle which the country "would never stand." At the same time, there was a general recognition of Cosmo's patriotic motive, and of his promise as a parliamentary speaker. It was talked about, of course, in society, too. Lady Octopa had a dinner-party the next night, and was full of it. Lady Octopa was clever, but she devoted the *fine fleur* of her brains to social intrigue. In politics she was cynically without principle, and disbelieved in any political motive, apart from party or personal considerations; but Cosmo's "escapade" delighted her by its novelty and audacity, and she was full of it.

"Instead of humdrumming in the Lords, you should have been with Esmé and me in the Commons last night, Lord Germistounne," she said to the old lord, who, with his daughter, was of the party.

"Ah, indeed!" said Lord Germistounne, who had been too gouty to read the parliamentary reports, and had not heard of the incident—"ah, indeed! was there anything stirring there?"

Esmé, who was within earshot, turned pale.

"Oh yes!" said her ladyship; "a young member made his maiden speech, and dashed into the middle of the Estimates, with all sorts of startling ideas to show that the money would be wasted as long as we are what we are."

"Ha! ha! one of the new-light Radicals."

"Not at all; a Tory, a very handsome man, with the most delightful voice in the world, and a capital speaker. I quite fell in love with him. He wishes to introduce the Swiss system, or something of that sort—only fancy! But he managed to make it sound very plausible."

"The contemptible scoundrel!"

"No, no; I tell you I am in love with him, and I cannot hear him spoken of so. I am re-

solved to know him, and to make him quite my *protégé*; and he is an immense *parti*, I hear. The odd thing is, I can't remember his name. Colonel—Colonel—I know he is a soldier—"

"Lord Alexander Overslaugh, perhaps? He is a clever youth, but has some sinister ideas."

"No, no; not Lord anything: Colonel, or Major, or Captain something. Oh! what is his name? Esmé, you can tell me; what is his name?"

"Whose name, Lady Octopa?" gasped Esmé.

"Why, the handsome member, with the fine eyes and the divine voice—last night, you know—in the House."

Esmé made no reply.

"Why, how stupid you are! The man who abused the army—said they were all stunted and immoral? Why, you *do* know him. Now I remember, you told me so."

"Mr. Glencairn," muttered Esmé, with her eyes cast down.

"Of course! Mr. Glencairn. Do you know him, Lord Germistoun?"

"I do *not*," said his lordship, with keen emphasis.

"Ah, well! you must come and meet him here. He belongs to the party—a most ornamental addition to it!"

"It is always a privilege to meet any of your ladyship's friends; but this man, who is not yet among their number, I must decline to meet."

"Lord Germistoun! Why?"

"Why? because he is—" The old gentleman paused, recollected himself, and only said: "Any one who could venture, and from the Conservative benches, to suggest the adaptation of any republican monstrosity to our system, is a renegade, and a traitorous charlatan. As such, I should decline to meet him, even at your ladyship's table."

"Nonsense! If you heard him—if you saw him, you would be at once converted."

"I am sorry to controvert your ladyship's view; but I distinctly say 'No!'"

"How harsh! Esmé, don't you think Colonel Glencairn would make a conquest of your father, as he did of you and me?" Esmé, half fainting, turned to her next neighbor and tore him away from another conversation, and thus evaded a reply to Lady Octopa, who then let the subject drop.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A FEW days after Cosmo had made his *début* in the House of Commons, Tom Wyedale asked him to dine with him at the "Kakodaemon." Tom had managed to bring, through the fire of *baccarat* at Rome, a fair amount of the spoil which he had taken from M. Blanc at Monte Carlo; and what with this—what with his matrimonial feint, which, besides enabling him to appease the rustier of his creditors, had yielded a reasonable little profit to himself—he was able again to enjoy what he called a "Christian-like" season in town. The dinner was a very pleasant one. The marquiss, who had run over for a Newmarket meeting, had been captured by Tom; and when Tom and the marquiss got together there was certain to be good fun. When the dinner was over, these two quaint allies strolled up the street with Cosmo, for they

were all going to "finish" at Tom's chambers. On the way, Tom suddenly recollected that he must look in at Mrs. Combleton's ball—just for an instant. Mrs. Combleton was a familiar cousin and ally of his own, so he could introduce the marquiss—especially as he was a foreigner; but had Cosmo an invitation? Yes, Cosmo had, but he never went to balls now. "Nonsense!" cried Tom. "Come, just for three minutes. Three minutes of—call it boredom, if you please—will give a zest to subsequent tobacco. I *must* go, because I have to arrange with the Rimmons, who are to be there, about going to the country with them to-morrow morning for a day or two; but I promise not to keep you. Come along!" Eventually Cosmo was persuaded, and they went.

Mrs. Combleton lived in one of the big houses in Grosvenor Place, which afforded ample scope for a large ball; but on this occasion its capabilities were strained by the number of the guests who, even more than is usual, overflowed from the dancing-room, vainly seeking space and coolness in divers havens. In "the open," at the top of the staircase, several dowagers had secured comfortable positions for general observation, and favorable bases for operating on the supper-room at the fitting opportunity. As the three friends made their way up-stairs, one of these dames hurriedly called a neighbor's attention to them, and as they were passing she stopped Tom Wyedale.

"That is Mr. Glencairn who is with you?" she whispered, rather eagerly.

"Yes, I understand. He has made a speech. He is being spoken about. You wish me to present him?"

"Thanks, if you will. I am in love with him."

Tom went to Cosmo. "Come," he said, "and be introduced to a lady who is in love with you." And Cosmo went, and was presented to Lady Octopa Hawker.

Her ladyship was extremely frank and gracious. "I liked your speech the other night," she said.

Cosmo was very proud to hear it; and she went on: "I don't know much about the merits of the case; but I like your style; and you really seemed to believe what you said. *Did* you really believe it?"

Cosmo laughed. "Naturally," he said, "or I would not have said it."

"Not naturally at all. The more people appear to be in earnest, the less they are so, as a rule. We are all shams and humbugs."

"Let us except ourselves."

"Well, I will except you, if you please. And you really *were* in earnest?" gazing at Cosmo as a naturalist regards a rare specimen.

"I *really* believed I was, but you begin to shake my faith."

"I was there, you know. I heard you myself."

Again Cosmo was very proud to hear it, and Lady Octopa continued: "I was talking about your speech at dinner, this evening, to Sir Gasper Puffin. He didn't like it at all. He is a general, you know, of the old school; and he says you are a Radical, and ought not to sit with the Conservatives. You mustn't be a Radical. It won't pay in the long-run."

"I begin to think I don't know the meaning of the word Radical, or any party designation."

At present these names appear to stand in the way of any rational classification of opinion. *Apropos* of this miserable speech, I have been described as of every opposing shade of politics. What is a Radical, Lady Octopa?"

"Oh! a destructive—an anarchist, of course."

"Ah, well! my poor speech had very different designs. It was a humble attempt to suggest a method of self-preservation to the country, and the substitution of an orderly system for a system of happy-go-lucky."

"Perhaps, perhaps; but you mustn't be a Radical. It doesn't pay. Ah, my dear! here you are! Pray sit down and occupy this place. I can see that that old frump Lady Anathema Towler is steering for it."

Lady Octopa faced the ball-room door, and Cosmo's back was turned to it; so he had not observed the approach of the young lady addressed, and who had been brought up at that moment by her partner.

He turned to make way for her, and beheld Esmè. She stood with her eyes cast down. Her emotions can be understood more readily than described; and in addition to them all was the supreme difficulty of deciding how to look, or speak, or act. The *rencontre* which she had foreseen as possible, some time or other, in London society, had occurred in the most awkward way, and found her without any prearranged line of conduct. She stood, therefore, like one transfixed, without raising her eyes. Cosmo also stood perfectly silent and motionless. The real facts of the situation escaped Lady Octopa. She fancied this was one of those cases which so often occur, when people who have had a casual acquaintanceship at one time meet after a long interval, and don't quite know whether the acquaintanceship is, or is not, supposed to continue.

"I think, Esmè," she said, "you and Mr. Glencairn have met before?"

Esmè, without looking up, murmured some sort of assent, and bowed in the direction of Cosmo. At that moment her chaperon exclaimed, "I see Mrs. Honiton going, and I must just say one word to her. Pray sit down, Esmè, and keep my place. I shall be back in an instant," and so left them. Something else had happened to empty the rest of the sofa, and they were alone together, for the first time since, in the wild and beautiful Highland scene, they had replighted their eternal troth—

"Sworn it a thousand times,
Sealed it with kisses, watered it with tears."

Esmè sank into Lady Octopa's place, and gazed on the ground.

"Esmè, darling!"

"Oh, Cosmo, please don't speak to me! Don't make me break my promise."

"Only tell me that your love is the same!"

"I must tell papa everything I say to you."

"Are you afraid to own to him your love?"

"No, Cosmo; but you do not know what I shall have to suffer. But, ah! my darling, my darling!" she murmured, looking up, "I cannot bear to see your poor pale face so sad. No, my love is not the same, but far, far stronger; it grows every day—that is the only change it can ever know. Is that enough, dearest—is that enough?"

"It is the sweetest music I ever listened to, and—"

"So much for Mrs. Honiton; she has gone on to Lady Crushley's; and, I think, if you are ready, dear, we had better go on there too. I am perishing with thirst, and the champagne here is not drinkable—never is. That wretch, Mr. Wyedale, said just now that 'Fortunately' it's only gooseberry; but I want real wine. Let us go."

Thus Lady Octopa; and Cosmo took them down to their carriage; and it was well with him, and well, too, with Esmè—for the moment, that is to say. But not so well with her next morning, when, feeling thereto in honor bound, she went resolutely to her father and related what had chanced between Cosmo and herself. Then all the storms of the autumn and winter were re-awakened. There was a terrible scene. Cosmo was denounced to Lady Octopa. Police supervision set in again, and it was very far indeed from being well with the poor girl.

CHAPTER L.

SOME weeks later, Cosmo, on returning to his rooms, found a gentleman there awaiting his arrival. He was old, tall, very yellow, and very wizened; and his clear hazel eyes, made prominent by the emaciation of his face, had a look of intensity and scrutiny which seemed habitual. He was a total stranger to Cosmo; yet, when the latter entered and bowed to him, courteously, but with an air of inquiry, he did not rise from his seat.

"You are Cosmo Glencairn?" he asked.

"That is my name," said Cosmo.

"I am glad to see you. Shake hands. Excuse me for keeping my seat. I am old and ill—infernally old and infernally ill—a ruin tumbling to pieces; and there ought to be no ceremony between you and me." Cosmo shook hands with him, but, not quite seeing why his visitor's dilapidation should place them on such free-and-easy terms, remained standing.

"Sit down!" said the old gentleman; "it fidgets me to see you standing." The man was evidently "a character," and Cosmo, feeling strongly inclined to laugh, complied.

"I am pleased with you," continued his visitor.

Cosmo bit his lip and bowed, but said nothing.

"You are good-looking; you look like breeding (which is a piece of internal evidence), and you are going to do well in the House, I hear. This is as it ought to be. I am pleased with you."

"You are very flattering, but may I ask—"

"Are you like your father?"

"Really, sir!—Well, I don't know that I am considered so; but—"

"I am glad of that; I hate your father."

"Sir, I cannot submit—"

"Yes, you can; for I will correct myself and say that I *hated* him. I mean to let by-gones be by-gones. If any one were to run against me and strike me in the region of the liver, he would pulverize it."

"May I ask how that bears upon your reconciliation with my father?"

"Yes, you may. It bears upon it in this way—that when a man's organs are in this brittle

state death must be near him, and he ought, as the Bible says, to agree with his adversary quickly, particularly when that adversary ought to close his eyes. You see that?"

"Indeed I don't. I know nothing of your variance with my father—whom you don't even seem to know by sight; and how it should be his duty to close your eyes puzzles me, I confess."

"Know nothing of our quarrel? Has he never spoken to you about me?"

"I must remind you that you have not yet done me the honor to introduce yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"Frankly, that I don't know who you are."

Considering his fragility, the old gentleman jerked himself out of his chair with great energy.

"Not know who I am! Why, you got my note warning you of this visit, didn't you?"

"No, I have not received any note."

"I sent one last night. These scoundrels at the hotel have neglected it, confound them! There's no sort of discipline in this country, confound it! Then, of course, you don't know that I am your uncle, Robert Glencairn?—Sir Robert Glencairn, by-the-bye, from to-day, when they have gazetted me K.C.S.I. on retirement—a *little* late in the day, I think."

Cosmo's manner, of course, changed at once, and he offered his uncle all manner of hearty welcomes and apologies; and then the conversation was renewed on a different footing, and carried on for a long time. In the course of it Sir Robert, after stating that he had only arrived from the East the day before yesterday, described his career in India, with which he was dissatisfied. Of his brother and also of his own liver he spoke rather acrimoniously, attributing the waste of his life to their influence. If his brother would have advanced the necessary funds to enable him to take advantage of an opening in the indigo trade which had offered itself, he would have been a rich man, and at home, twenty-five years ago; if his liver had only conducted itself with any sort of propriety, his period of exile would have been more useful and more endurable. "But," he added, "as I said before, I am going to let by-gones be by-gones with your father. As for my liver, it is honey-combed to the extent of being the merest phantom and pretence."

By-and-by he opened a subject of deeper and, indeed, of vital interest to Cosmo, and in speaking of it almost all the eccentricities of his speech and manner left him.

"Has your father," he asked, "ever spoken to you about our family?"

"Only once, at my urgent request. I was, and am, eager, even desperately eager, to discover the facts of our history."

"That is right! that is excellent!—instinct of family pride—another internal proof! The subject has been, I may say, on my mind all my life. My father incessantly spoke of it, and I was taught from my infancy to believe that we were not what we appeared—nameless, illegitimate nobodies—but very much the reverse, indeed. It is maddening that we should not be able to get at the truth! Did your father tell you the whole story?"

"Yes, all that he knew. I will repeat his version, and perhaps you will make any corrections or additions which it is in your power to make."

Cosmo then went over his father's summary, and when he had done so, his uncle said that it was, in the main, correct.

"I must add, however," he said, "an important fact. Though my father was a young child when he was left an orphan, he had a distinct recollection that, on one occasion, this extraordinary parent of his—this man who has mystified us all—was in a violent passion on account of some social slight which he had received, and, in abusing those who had slighted him, swore that if he only chose to declare who he really was, instead of being treated with contempt, he would be at the head of the society of the place—that 'these wretches would be all crawling to him!' The phrase remained in the boy's memory, and, of course, influenced my father's belief as well as my own. There is, besides, plenty of internal evidence that we are people of lineage. You don't get features like ours, and carriage, and so forth, without blue blood; you don't get tempers like ours without it. My grandfather, my father, your father, and I myself have all had violent, autocratic tempers. How are *you* in that respect?"

Cosmo could not repress a smile, despite the old man's earnestness, as he replied that he believed he had, at least, a pretty firm will.

"Exactly!" said his uncle. "Well, all that proves descent from a race accustomed to command, to rule, to be obeyed. I think we may be satisfied, on many grounds, that in that respect we are all right. Then, as to the legitimacy question, what evidence have we on this head? Mr. Denwick, who was senior partner of my grandfather, was the only evidence; and his testimony amounts practically to nothing, *pro* or *con*. My grandmother died within a year of her arrival in India; and, as a matter of fact, Mr. Denwick saw nothing of the young couple during her life, and very little of my grandfather at all. They were associated in business; but my grandfather's branch of it lay at a great distance from Calcutta, where the head-quarters of the firm were. All that Mr. Denwick could say about the matter really was this—that my grandfather (who must have had his small patrimony paid him) was introduced to the firm by a gentleman of high standing in Calcutta, and who, in answer to inquiries which were naturally made as to character, stated that the youth had quarrelled with his family on account of a love-scrape; that he had brought the girl with him to India; that he had changed his original name, and desired that it should remain unknown. No doubt, my grandfather had satisfied this gentleman as to his real name and history; for the gentleman could not otherwise have guaranteed him. But here there is neither affirmation nor contradiction of a marriage; and if old Mr. Denwick took up the impression that there had been no marriage, the evidence which guided him is not apparent, and does not seem to have been stated by him. 'He never heard there had been a marriage'—that is all. The probability is that he had thought nothing of the matter till inquiries were made after my grandfather's death. He died very early; and as he lived in a remote district, we may assume that there never was any close intimacy between himself and the principal of his firm. If the latter took the child (my father) under his protection, and looked after its

interests, it was only what any reasonably benevolent man would have done in the case of the child of a partner, left an orphan and absolutely alone in a strange land, and who, moreover, inherited some pecuniary interest in the business. The fact is, Mr. Denwick's intimate connection with our history was really subsequent to my grandfather's death; so, unless some dispute about the child's inheritance had arisen, there was no reason why the question of a marriage should have come before him at all. As a matter of fact, no dispute did, or could, arise about the trifling inheritance, which passed to the child by a very brief will, scrawled by my grandfather on a scrap of paper when on his death-bed.

"My father's own inquiries, then, when he was nearly grown up, might first cause Mr. Denwick's mind to be turned to the marriage question seriously, and then any information he had once possessed might be hazily remembered or forgotten altogether.

"My grandfather, after his last seizure, was very soon unconscious, and had little time to do or say anything. A subordinate of the firm was the only European near him. This person he directed to hand his papers and effects over to Mr. Denwick, to whom he sent a message begging him to take charge of the child. He left Mr. Denwick his Bible as a souvenir; and his last wanderings appear to have run, not in any way upon his wife and the marriage, but in a pious direction, upon the necessity of studying the Holy Book and considering his child's precious interests, apart from the worldly consideration of his small inheritance. The papers he left were stated by Mr. Denwick to relate solely to the business of the firm, with the exception of the will and the certificate of my father's birth and baptism at a station of the East India Company, both of which were handed over, and are now in my possession.

"My father frequently importuned Mr. Denwick, and, after him, his son, for all the papers; but they both declined to give or even to show them, as they related to private transactions in business. This refusal eventually led to a coolness between my father and the second Mr. Denwick, who steadily repeated the same assurances to me after my father's death; and there was, apparently, nothing more to be made of the matter through that channel.

"At one time I advertised largely in Scotland, begging for information from any gentleman's family in whose records it might appear, that one of their members had disappeared about the year 1780, gone abroad, and lived, presumably, under a feigned name. Nothing, however, was forthcoming, and I have let the matter drop for a good many years, not meaning to let it drop finally, but waiting till, with the advantages of being at home and at leisure, I could prosecute the inquiry on a larger scale. I am now at home and at leisure, but, unfortunately, I am dying."

"You must not say that, uncle."

"I must recognize the truth; and I wish now to get your promise to prosecute the search when I am gone. You are rich, you have the instinct of family pride, you can afford to do it—and you will do it?"

"Certainly; but I hope you will live to do it yourself."

"While I have any sort of vitality left I will certainly do so; and the first thing to be done is to discover the representative of the Denwicks. Do you know anything about him?"

"Intimately. Philip Denwick, the son of your guardian, is my closest friend; and, by chance, he dines with me this very night."

"You think he will not be averse to showing any of those papers, if he has them?"

"I am sure he would not; but I doubt if he has any in his possession. His father was all but ruined before his death, and Phil himself entirely so, by an unfortunate speculation. He had no house or property of any sort, when a friend was able to save him. He is now doing well; but I doubt if he has anything, even a paper, which belonged to his father."

"You will ask him, at all events. The next thing is to put the whole case into the hands of some clever investigator. I understand that such inquiries are now conducted by experts as a profession."

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, we must start them on the business at once, and guarantee them ample funds and ample rewards."

Here the interview ended, the state of Sir Robert's liver compelling him to decline Cosmo's invitation to meet Phil at dinner.

When the matter was opened to Phil, he stated, contrary to Cosmo's expectation, that two large tin boxes, containing, he believed, a number of papers connected with Indian and other business, were in the possession of an old maiden aunt of his, to whom he had confided them (meaning to look through them some day), with a few family relics, at the time when he sold off all his father's effects and began to lead a wandering life. The old lady lived in a remote part of the country; but the boxes were soon sent up to town, and placed in the hands of the experts to whom Sir Robert had intrusted the conduct of the inquiry.

In a week the following result was reached: The boxes contained no papers in any way connected with the Glencairns. The only thing concerning them at all was the Bible bequeathed by Cosmo's great-grandfather to Phil's grandfather. It was a plain old pocket-Bible. On the fly-leaf was written,

"To Jean G., from Norman G.,
1st June, 1781;"

and, underneath, the motto,

"Search the Scriptures."

On the reverse side was a memorandum by old Mr. Denwick—

"Left to me by Norman Glencairn, who died in India 1787. R. DENWICK."

The investigators, of course, assumed that Jean G. was Norman Glencairn's wife; and there is, or was, much virtue, according to Scotch law, in any matrimonial declaration or implication written on a Bible in the familiar use of the parties.

But there were two fatal defects here. If the full names had been written, it might, perhaps, have been argued, according to Scotch law, that Norman Glencairn and Jean Glencairn acknowledged each other to be man and wife, and became man and wife, by the fact of that writing

in the Bible; but the mere initials were insufficient. The second defect was, that there was nothing to show that the writing had been made in Scotland, without which it had no virtue at all.

Phil presented the Bible to Sir Robert Glencairn, and that seemed all that he was likely to make by the investigation, as far as the Denwick connection could help him. When another week had elapsed, however, the investigators reported with triumph what was, so far, a solid comfort and consolation to their clients, and this was—that, having advertised a considerable reward for proofs of a marriage contracted between parties of the name of Norman Glencairn and Jean —, in Scotland, in or about the year 1781, they had received from the session-clerk of the parish of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, an extract from the parochial register, certifying to the marriage, in that parish, of Norman Glencairn to Jean Lothian, on the 1st of June, 1781, after the banns had been “cried” three times on the previous Sabbath.

The legitimacy was thus established, and the Bible had been given by Norman to his wife on their wedding-day. Sir Robert was greatly elated, a load was taken off Cosmo’s mind, and their hopes of further discoveries were high for a time. But, alas! there the matter ended. The investigators could get no manner of clue to connect Norman Glencairn with any gentleman’s or any other family; or, indeed, to trace his history, for a single day, beyond the day of his marriage. It appeared, therefore, that his descendants must console themselves for the shortness of their pedigree by its cleanness, in so far as was known of it.

The matter continued formally in the hands of the investigators, but rather because Sir Robert was unwilling finally to surrender a hope which had become with him an *idée fixe*, than because they held out any anticipations of success.

The disappointment affected the old man’s already shattered health very injuriously; his vitality ebbed away; his interest grew languid even in a possible discovery, as in all the concerns of this world; and his days were evidently numbered.

CHAPTER LI.

ONE afternoon, toward the close of the session, Cosmo was just leaving his rooms to go down to the House, when he encountered Phil Denwick at the door.

“Ah! Phil,” he cried, “well met. You’ll walk with me, won’t you?” then added, with a start, as he looked into his friend’s face, which was strangely pale and disturbed, “Good heavens! what’s the matter?”

“Come back, come into your rooms, Cosmo, and I’ll tell you.” So they went back.

“Now, Phil,” cried Cosmo, “out with it.”

“Poor Cosmo! poor Cosmo!” groaned Phil.

“Something has happened to me, then?”

“My best friend! my kindest friend! Poor Cosmo!”

“Hang it! Phil, give me the facts first, and the sentiments afterward.”

“Ruined! smashed! swindled!”

“Who is? I?”

“Everybody.”

“That’s pretty comprehensive; but please explain.”

“Hopper has absconded.”

“Absconded? Hopper? Impossible!”

“Yes; ruined the Company first, and then bolted; left nothing behind him but mountains of iron.”

“I’m glad to hear he has left behind anything so substantial; but has he taken much money?”

“Not a farthing.”

“Why on earth has he absconded, then?”

“There was no money to take.”

“That sounds a strange reason.”

“Not at all; there are liabilities to meet which amount to more than three-quarters of a million, and there’s little or nothing to meet them with. That’s why he bolted.”

“But where is the money?”

“All buried in this iron.”

“Well, but if the iron is there, why he should have absconded is still a mystery.”

“Not at all; iron isn’t money, and now it isn’t even money’s worth. It’s a drug in the market—unsalable. We’re all ruined and done for. Hopper has been a maniac. He has bought up iron enough to build a metropolis with. To do this he has used all our money and borrowed enormously; and now we have to repay his borrowings—that is to say, to pay for the iron at a price which is thirty, forty, or fifty per cent. above its present value—and only its nominal value; for there is no market for it and practically no price. Do you understand now?”

“To a certain extent. What object could he have if it was not plunder?”

“Oh, to make a grand *coup* for the Company. He is ambitious and speculative, and thought he saw his way. I’ll show you what he says in a moment. We had the quarterly meeting to-day. We met, thinking no evil. Hopper hadn’t put in an appearance at the office in the forenoon; but a letter addressed in his writing had come for the chairman, and we supposed it would explain his absence. It did explain it very completely. I took a copy of the letter, and here it is. Read it.”

Cosmo took it, and read as follows:

“London, July, 13—.

“SIR,—With a hand which trembles so that I can hardly guide the pen, I write this—a confession not of guilt, but of misfortune. Operations of mine, dictated by the purest zeal, but thwarted by circumstances beyond my control, have, I fear, fatally compromised the interests of the Company; and my feelings will not permit me, at present, to face its representatives. I am retiring, therefore, into a, so to speak, temporary seclusion, but a full explanation of the Company’s unfortunate position and the causes which have produced it will be found in my desk (key enclosed).

“From it you will perceive that the Company will have, within a few days, to face a demand for over £700,000. All the debentures issued by the Company are under notice, and fall due immediately, and many acceptances, which cannot be renewed, will come to maturity at the same time, there being, to my regret, no appreciable provision to meet them.

"The honesty of my intentions will, however, be obvious to the Company when they find that the moneys covered by the debentures and bills are fully represented by iron in their possession; and, even in the moment of their affliction, they will probably find a gloomy satisfaction in the feeling that they are the largest holders of this metal in the world!"

"In securing this splendid holding, I believed that I was making the fortune of the Company. I confess that I made the operations on my own responsibility; but if I blinded the board, and, so to speak, managed individual directors, I justified this by the consideration that, from lack of courage, they might lose a golden opportunity. All mortals are liable to error, and error induced by noble motives is worthy of generous sympathy rather than of austere blame. It is from this point of view that the Company will, I feel confident, regard my proceedings.

"As to the measures which ought to be adopted in view of the impending demands, the board will excuse me from offering any suggestion. On this point I have already racked my brain to no purpose, and I now prefer to pass the painful subject by in a respectful silence. I would venture to make one appeal on behalf of my honored friend the guarantor. I trust that that blameless gentleman may not be compelled to bear the loss too exclusively. I would say to the Company, 'Remember, gentlemen, that you are Christians, and, being strong, be merciful.' Your afflicted, humble servant, PETER HOPPER.

"The Chairman,
"A. Glencairn & Co., Ltd."

"I scarcely know," said Cosmo, whose face was now sufficiently grave, "what the full bearing of this is."

"We very soon discovered that," said Phil, who then gave him a rapid *résumé* of Hopper's statement, which, with a few necessary explanations, we will as briefly as possible retail.

For a considerable time prior to these events, the commercial atmosphere had been darkening everywhere. Wars, and warlike rumors, national repudiations and insolvencies—these, with many other influences, had taken all vitality from the trade of the world. Great Britain had suffered above other countries, and in no department was the depression so severe as in her iron trade. The Glencairn Company had commenced its career when the antecedent wave of prosperity was at its height; but the wave turned over shortly after its inauguration; the Company's profits had continuously diminished; and Mr. Glencairn, its guarantor, had been obliged largely to supplement the last dividend, so as to bring it up to the minimum which he had guaranteed. Mr. Hopper—the managing director—had great ascendancy over the ordinary directors, most of whom, including the chairman, were simply country gentlemen, and none of whom were, in any true sense, men of business.

Mr. Glencairn's confidence in the manager contributed to the ascendancy of the latter, and relieved him of the interference of Mr. Glencairn himself, who was, in little more than name, a member of the board. Mr. Hopper, who was thus in a position of power, was, unfortunately, speculative, sanguine, and adroit. The decline in trade he regarded as a temporary check, which

suggested to him not retrenchment, but expansion; he saw in it an opportunity of securing a grand, if deferred, increase of profitable business, by assuming the relinquished operations of other firms; and for this purpose he induced the Company to provide ways and means, by issuing debentures for £300,000. At the same time, it unhappily occurred to him that an immense holding of the manufactured article, secured at the present depreciated rates, would give the Company a very powerful position when the demand revived. He, therefore, invested the whole of the debenture money in iron, and further increased his operations by means of the Company's acceptances, till his holding touched the value of three-quarters of a million. The money was at his disposal in this way—that, though his checks required the countersign of two directors, he could always choose his directors, and mystify them as to the destination of the funds; and, acting similarly with regard to the acceptances, he thus, and by other stratagems, contrived that the Company should know nothing of the great transactions in which they were involved.

But Mr. Hopper bought too soon. Prices continued to fall alarmingly, and did not touch their lowest point till long after his last purchases had been made. Just at this time most of the debentures (under notice), and all the acceptances, were about to fall due; and, in a word, Mr. Hopper found the Company confronted with an imminent demand for £750,000, there being nothing to meet it with but the unsalable stock of iron, of which, in the regular way of business, they had, besides, a considerable accumulation. He exhausted every expedient, but in vain, and, on the eve of a general meeting, when the explosion of his schemes was due within ten days, he disappeared. Such was the history which Phil communicated to Cosmo.

"I still," said the latter, "do not fully comprehend what effect all this will have upon the shareholders, and what it will mean for my father."

"It means, first of all—which affects me most of all—that your goodness to me has probably cost you £25,000. Oh, Cosmo! why did you not leave me to drift and starve? I am one of those wretches who bring ill luck to every one. I should never have let you do what you did."

"That was my affair, Phil; and in the same circumstances I would do it over again. Don't distress yourself about that. I have more than enough of money without it—both for you and myself."

"But twenty-five thousand pounds!"

"Never mind the figure. I tell you it won't break me; but how can it all be lost?"

"Well, the Company must stop payment unless your father can meet a demand for perhaps half a million in something more than a week."

"My father?"

"Yes; he is the guarantor, you know."

"I should think it is impossible that he can produce such a sum at such notice."

"Of course it is. Well, then, the Company will stop payment. Its other liabilities will bring up other creditors, and there is nothing to satisfy them with but the stock of iron which cost this fabulous sum, but which is now almost valueless—"

"Well, go on, Phil."

"Well, the Company will be put into liquidation, and its assets will be realized. Its assets will consist of the stock and (since the shareholders have exhausted their liability) your father's whole fortune. That, Cosmo, is the sad way in which matters stand."

Cosmo sat down in sadness and bewilderment, and was silent for a time.

"I fear," he said at last, "this will utterly ruin my father. I have no idea what his fortune is; but I have reason to know that he has suffered great losses on the Continent lately, and, with £300,000 already locked up in the shares of this Company, if he can meet this immense demand at all, it will probably take his last available farthing to do so. My poor father! After his long life of work and anxiety, to be beggared in this way! It is too cruel! Of course, he will move heaven and earth to prevent the stoppage of payment, and if that madman Hopper had confessed to him a few weeks ago, he might probably have been able to do so; as it is, it appears to me hardly possible. What happened at the meeting? How did they take it?"

"Take it! You never saw men in such a state. The chairman is only a sort of lay figure, and had no control. Every one talked at the same time, and in the most violent language, but no one made any calm suggestions. There was an unreasonable disposition to attack your father. I am sorry to say Lord Germistoun used such expressions about him that I was obliged to protest, and we had a regular passage-of-arms. Eventually the meeting was adjourned till to-morrow, so that your father might be present; and the only sort of conclusion which seemed to be arrived at was to press him to the uttermost."

The two friends sat in long and melancholy discourse, which only ended in the conviction, that for each there was a certain grave calamity, which to-morrow's revelations could scarcely show to be lighter, and might probably prove to be still more disastrous.

CHAPTER LII.

THE meeting took place at two o'clock on the following afternoon, and before that time some forty or fifty persons had assembled in the Company's board-room. In addition to his indirect holding in the Company, Cosmo had taken shares, in his own name, to a moderate amount, and he was present with the other shareholders. He had gone early, hoping to see his father before the proceedings commenced; but at ten minutes past two, when the chairman had taken the chair, Mr. Glencairn had not arrived.

The chairman was nervous and fussy. "I think," he said, "that until the arrival of Mr. Glencairn, upon whom our action mainly depends, it will be useless to open the business of the meeting. I do not anticipate that he will keep us long waiting."

Hereupon Lord Germistoun rose and said, "I desire to place upon record the distinct expression of my surprise, and, I may add, indignation, at the treatment to which Mr. Glencairn is subjecting this Company. That gentleman, who is, at least, indirectly responsible for our painful position, has the discourtesy to keep a meeting

waiting which, in my opinion, is entitled to expect a very different attitude on his part—one of becoming humility, of an eagerness to explain, to—"

At that moment Mr. Glencairn entered, erect and determined as usual, but with traces of anxiety and fatigue in his strong face. He bowed to the chairman, and took a seat opposite to Lord Germistoun, who continued on his feet, and went on:

"Since the gentleman has arrived, it is unnecessary for me to do more than repeat, in his presence, that his conduct, in keeping this meeting waiting, is, in my opinion, a scandalous act of discourtesy. His position ought to dictate an attitude of humility and deference to the Company."

He sat down, and Mr. Glencairn at once rose, displaying the same autocratic bearing as his assailant, made more effective, however, by the contemptuous curtness of his reply.

"I am sorry," he said, "that the meeting has been put to inconvenience. The explanation is simple. My train was delayed. I will only add that, in his remarks, the noble lord, either wilfully or from stupidity, misrepresents what he calls my 'position.'"

Lord Germistoun sprang to his feet. "Mr. Chairman," he said, "if wilful misrepresentation is to be imputed—"

"I will retract that expression," said Mr. Glencairn, surveying the angry peer with a look of sovereign contempt. "I cheerfully admit that I should have said misrepresentation from stupidity, without an alternative. I now move that we at once proceed to business."

The chairman then recapitulated the transactions of Mr. Hopper, read over his statement, announced that vouchers proved the existence of the full amount of iron, but that the impending demands on them amounted to £750,000. The question, he said, was how these liabilities were to be met. To him it appeared that the Company was almost without available resources. With an immense stock, it was practically insolvent.

He sat down, looking at Mr. Glencairn, upon whom all other eyes were hungrily fixed. Before that gentleman had time to speak, however, Lord Germistoun was again upon his feet.

"There is," he said, "but one obvious resource. Mr. Glencairn has had the impertinence to apply the word 'stupid' to me. I would tell him, however, that I am sufficiently acute to know that for all these liabilities *he* is liable, and that he is also now bound to refund to us the price of our shares—in a word, to take back his precious concern into his own hands, and restore to us the money which we were deluded enough to give him for it. I can assure him that we will submit to nothing less. Neither brow-beating nor evasion will avail with this meeting. We will have no boggings. Any attempt to boggle will be summarily repressed. Let him now declare how he proposes to relieve us; and let me again counsel him to employ a tone in keeping with his position."

Mr. Glencairn then rose and said: "The noble lord's wordiness will, I think, be seen to justify my use of the epithet which he resents. Our business is, however, too grave to be impeded by such contemptible chattering. The matter stands briefly thus, and my position is this: I am the guarantor of the Company—guarantee-

ing an annual dividend of nine per cent. On my failure to fulfil this guarantee, the share-holders are entitled to repudiate their contract with me, and to throw the business back upon my hands. That condition has not, as yet, arisen. I have fulfilled the guarantee, to my loss. Up to this time, then, the share-holders are not entitled to repudiate. To proceed: I admit my liability for the demands against the Company. If I meet them, our contract holds good. If I fail to do so, the share-holders will then, for the first time, be entitled to claim restitution of their purchase-money.

"By that time, however, the Company will be bankrupt (the liability of the share-holders being exhausted), and so shall I. My estate will be in liquidation, and the claims of individual share-holders upon it will be secondary to those which it will have to meet on behalf of the Company as a corporation. My assets, and those of the Company, could only now be realized at a ruinous sacrifice; and the chances are that the share-holders would recover but a very small portion of their money. From this it appears, then, that you cannot at present legally repudiate, and that your true policy is to prevent repudiation from becoming legal, under circumstances which would be detrimental to yourselves.

"Let us say that we have to meet, in ten days hence, a claim for £750,000. By any sort of operations with our stock of iron, and from all the other resources of the Company, it would be sanguine to expect that more than from three to four hundred thousand pounds can be thus rapidly produced; the other moiety, or say £400,000, will therefore have to be contributed by me.

"The demand is large and sudden: £350,000 of my capital are locked up in this Company; my other resources are distributed in home and foreign undertakings—all suffering from grievous depression. Frankly, I doubt my ability to meet this demand, though no effort of mine shall be spared. I now move our adjournment for five days; at the end of that time I shall be prepared to state what I can do, and the Company will be prepared to say what, failing me, it is prepared to do. I would say no more, but Lord Germistoun's strange misconception of my position compels me to point out that it is I who am the great sufferer, and by no fault of my own; that it is I who have a right to say to you, 'By the neglect of your nominees—the directors—my whole fortune has been compromised and probably lost.'

"The noble lord says I was one of them. True; but how? Why, at your importunate request. You thought my name would inspire confidence, and you importuned me to remain on the board, on the understanding that personal supervision was not to be expected from me, and that I was only to be referred to as an adviser in important matters. It is true I had confidence in the manager, who had served me for thirty years faithfully, but under supervision. I did not warrant him to you as a man who required no supervision. I would warrant no man, in his position, as such. If the directors who signed away all this money had had any proper prudence or sense of responsibility, they would not have sanctioned transactions which they did not thoroughly understand. If they

had referred to me as an adviser, we should not be in our present situation. Lord Germistoun will, perhaps, now comprehend that humility is not the attitude which can be expected from me by the Company, but a very different attitude indeed!" With these words Mr. Glencairn left the meeting, over which silence prevailed for a moment, and then there burst forth a babel of wild talk, from which Cosmo escaped, and followed his father.

"My dear father," he said, warmly, "what can I say to you? what can I do to help you?"

"You need say nothing, Cosmo, and you can do nothing; for you know nothing of such matters. All that can be done must be done by myself personally; whether it will be availing or not, is another question."

"I trust you are more sanguine than your tone implies."

"Until I have seen certain bankers and brokers here, it is difficult to form an opinion."

"Shall you be long with them, do you think? When may I expect you at my rooms, for of course you will stay with me?"

"Thanks; no. I must leave for Paris tonight. I shall put certain proposals before certain people here, and leave them for consideration. I shall then go to Paris with similar proposals."

"You won't be able to see my uncle, then, this time?"

"No, Cosmo. Tell him I am sorry not to do so, and sorry he is so poorly. It is impossible for me to stay, however. After all, it would be a melancholy time for our first meeting. Two old men—one threatened with death, the other with ruin! A week or two may make things better—his health and my finance. Let us hope so. Good-bye."

CHAPTER LIII.

THE succeeding week was one of deep anxiety, unhappiness, and suspense for Cosmo. In answer to several letters of inquiry, his father maintained an obstinate silence. He was terribly hard; he did not appear to value or even to understand sympathy; a sworn enemy to words which could not advance the business of the moment, he neither employed nor welcomed any graceful superfluities of language. Not that he was naturally an unkindly man; but concentration was the first instinct of his nature, and circumstances had directed its operation upon the dry facts of life, and warped it away from the domain of sentiment and the emotions. Cosmo very imperfectly understood his father, and was deeply pained by his reticence. The misfortunes of the latter and the manly imperturbability of his attitude before the meeting had called forth all his son's natural sympathy and captivated his admiration, and the "chill response of silence" with which his affectionate overtures had been met disappointed his sensitive nature. From a practical point of view, also, his father's silence was distressing, for it prevented him from shaping his own course, in view of certain eventualities. To add to the misery of the situation, there was Lord Germistoun's unfortunate connection with the Company, and his embroilment with Mr. Glencairn; so that, altogether, Cosmo was surround-

ed with clouds, and there was scarcely a speck of light on his horizon. Nor was it better with Esmè. By a sort of poetical equation of the burdens which true-love has to bear, she had her fair share of the new distress. On the afternoon of the meeting, her father returned home in a state of positive frenzy. He loved money, and he saw much of his money in peril; he hated his adversary, and his adversary had brushed aside his assaults with contempt, and silenced him by his sturdy common-sense. Lord Germistounne did not like his wrath to boil over vaguely; he liked it to boil over so that it might scald and hurt some other person—no matter whom, no matter how innocent; and on this occasion Esmè was the victim. When he entered the drawing-room where she was sitting, the expression of his face positively alarmed her.

"Papa," she cried, "what is the matter? you look dreadfully ill!"

"It is natural that a man should look ill when he has first been robbed, and then outrageously insulted by a swindling thief!"

"Robbed! insulted! By whom?"

"Oh, by some scoundrels *you* are deeply interested in—these infernal Glencairns!"

Esmè's color and voice forsook her. She could only mutter, "I don't understand."

Then the old lord, incoherent with passion, went stammering on, "That Company of theirs—blown up—a million of money—all vanished—he puts his hand into my pocket, picks it of £20,000, and then tells me I am a contemptible chatterer! And *this* is the family you wished to marry into! By heavens, it's enough to make me disown you! Mercifully, they will be ruined, though. Curse them both, the blackguards! What? Why don't you speak?"

"I have nothing to say," said Esmè, in a faint voice.

"You might, at least, have the grace to say that you are sorry."

"I am sorry if you have lost money."

"And, I hope, sorry and ashamed that you ever had any sort of connection with such a crew. The very thought of the thing is maddening."

"Your accusation," said Esmè, with a powerful effort to control her voice, "is incomprehensible; but at least I know that Mr. Cosmo Glencairn has nothing to do with the Company you speak of."

"Oh! you know that, do you? Good! ha! ha!"

"Yes, I know it. He told me."

"Better and better! You never heard of a secret accomplice, I suppose? He is as great a scoundrel as his father, I make little doubt."

"I cannot listen to this. I must leave you."

And she fled from the room to tears and desolation. For her there was another volume of grief and pain—another chapter of mystery, involving the dishonor of her lover's family—not *his* dishonor, that was impossible, but apparently his ruin and his ignominious connection with tarnished men. It was all vague and dark; but it was all wretched and horrible. Was there never to be an end of trouble? Could there be yet more dregs of bitterness in the cup which Love was forcing her to drink? When Lord Germistounne had spoken as he had just done, he was really not responsible for his words. From his point of view, we must remember that there was

really some ground for his *acharnement* against the Glencairns, who seemed destined to thwart him at every turn. We must also remember that he was unused to any sort of thwarting. So that his frenzy was accountable, and was the only palliation for his brutal words and cruel distortion of facts.

When he had cooled down a little, he remembered his injustice, with a certain shame and repentance, under the influence of which he went to Esmè's room. "My opinion," he said, "of the Glencairns is as low as can be; but I admit that, in my just anger, I have used expressions which went beyond the mark. Mr. Glencairn's Company has been brought to the brink of ruin by the acts of his creature, for whose acts no one can acquit him of responsibility; and—although no fraud is proved against him personally, his conduct has been—is—outrageous and—and culpable in the last degree. As for his son—" He paused.

"What of his son, papa?" asked Esmè, looking her father steadily in the face.

"I believe the son to be capable of anything; but I will admit that his name was introduced by me, unnecessarily, upon this occasion."

"I do not require to be told that, papa."

"What! you are still dreaming of this fellow?"

"You wished to tell me, papa, that you had done him and his father injustice. I am very glad that you have told me so. But pray, pray, do not bring up more painful subjects. I cannot bear it; it is cruel; it is persecution!"

She threw herself down on the sofa and hid her face; and her father, after wasting a few tempestuous words on ears that did not listen, went away in wrath and bitterness.

When the day to which the meeting had been adjourned came round, Mr. Glencairn found that, in the existing stage of negotiations which were progressing in Paris, it was impossible for him to be present; which was at once announced by the chairman, who quelled a tumult which instantly arose, by stating that Mr. Glencairn had addressed a letter to the share-holders which embodied all his views and proposals; and this letter, with the permission of the meeting, he now begged to read. It was dated from Paris, and ran as follows:

GENTLEMEN,—I regret that a maximum sum of £650,000 is all that I can hope to have at disposal for the satisfaction of claims, to the amount of £750,000, shortly coming due against the Company. The sum thus at disposal will be supplied by operations, of one sort and another, with our stock of iron, which will yield no more than £250,000; and my own estate, partly by sales, partly by mortgages, will contribute (at a ruinous sacrifice) the complement of £400,000. From neither source can another farthing be extracted, in the present state of the markets. We are, therefore, short of our requirements by £100,000; and the share-holders must either be prepared to find that sum, or the bankruptcy of the Company and of myself also will be inevitable.

"In that double event there would be a double liquidation, when many other claims would have preference to those of the share-holders; so that their loss would, probably, much exceed the amount which I suggest they should sacrifice to keep the Company afloat.

"I have another alternative to propose, and it is this—that the share-holders should now dissolve their contract with me, and surrender their shares—the value of which (when the value of my large holding is deducted from the capital of the Company) is £550,000.

"With this sum, as well as with the amount of the impending claims, I should then be debited, representing a total of £1,300,000.

"To meet this debit, I should have the sum, now at my disposal, of £650,000, and a further sum of £400,000, which I have ascertained can be procured by mortgage of the shares—total, £1,050,000, leaving a deficit of £250,000. The share-holders would certainly have to endure the temporary loss of that amount; but I think it would be their safer policy to do so. It will be observed that they would in this way recover about two-thirds of their capital at once; and I do not think that I am sanguine in believing that such an improvement in the general conditions of finance and commerce must eventually take place as would enable me to satisfy their remaining claims, by restoring the value of securities now mortgaged on the basis of grave depreciation.

"In weighing between these alternatives, the share-holders must bear in mind three of the results involved by bankruptcy:

"1st. The shares would cease to be negotiable securities.

"2d. All assets of the Company's and of mine would have to be summarily realized.

"3d. There could not be a moment more unfavorable than the present for that operation.

"I leave you, gentlemen, to weigh these alternatives, and beg that your decision may be telegraphed to me here.

"I have the honor to be, your most obedient servant,
A. GLENCAIRN."

As soon as the chairman had concluded his reading, an hysterical tumult arose, and the angry gabble of disappointed, money-loving men.

There had been great faith in Mr. Glencairn's resources, and his failure was all the more engaging that it was unexpected. Little self-control was displayed. The few cool-headed men who essayed to speak were overpowered by cries of "Scandalous!" "An iniquity!" "A fraud!" "A plant!" "A robbery!" and so forth. The many hot-headed men who had proposals to make broke off in the midst of their words to join the chorus of wrath and execration.

Thus matters went on for a time, while Cosmo, white with disgust and anger, sat, hardly restrained by his own sound judgment, and by the vehement remonstrances of Phil Denwick, from avenging in a summary way the grosser insults heaped upon his father.

By degrees the storm somewhat abated, and there was some show of discussion carried on, still noisily, by isolated groups.

At last one calm gentleman rose, and said that he would accept Mr. Glencairn's statement as made *bona fide*, and move that his first suggestion should be adopted—that they should put their hands in their pockets, produce £100,000, and float the Company. But he got no farther than this, being summarily hooted down. He was followed by another calm gentleman, who said that, when you were in a bad business, the

best thing to be done was to get out of it at once and altogether, even at a loss: he proposed, therefore, that they should adopt the second alternative, which would at once give them a large portion of their money, and might probably restore it all in time. There was a good deal of confusion upon this, some of the meeting supporting the speaker's view; the great majority, however, who were obviously "irreconcilables," hooted it as they had hooted the previous motion.

Last of all rose Lord Germistoun, who evidently represented the popular sentiment, and was received with applause.

He was not there, he said, to discuss the *bona fides* of Mr. Glencairn; that gentleman's character was a matter of indifference to him and them. He simply looked at the matter thus—by what line of action were they likely to incur the smallest loss. With regard to the first proposal, it was too preposterous to be considered by sane men, and he would pass it by. With regard to the second, he thought there was a certain effrontery in it. They were simply asked to give Mr. Glencairn credit for £250,000 without any security. That was what it amounted to; and would the meeting stand that?"

The meeting shouted, here and there, with expletives, that it wouldn't, and his lordship went on:

"If they were to view it as a business proposal, it was at once audacious and puerile; if they were to regard it as an appeal *ad misericordiam*, he would suggest that Mr. Glencairn had no claim to their consideration. He was their guarantor, and, holding that capacity, he had no right to compromise the soundness of his guarantee by engaging in a hotchpotch of speculations all over the world. He thought the meeting would admit the justice of that homely expression?"

The meeting shouted that it did—that there was no sort of doubt about the hotchpotch.

"Very well, then," continued Lord Germistoun, "there could be no doubt about their attitude toward Mr. Glencairn. Now, that gentleman was obviously anxious to avoid the bankruptcies. That was natural. It was pleasanter to get indefinite credit for £250,000 than to have it summarily squeezed out of the pockets by the stern pressure of the law. As he had already said, he was not there to judge Mr. Glencairn's *bona fides*, and he made no imputations against it; but he might venture to assert, in the abstract, that the scrutiny of a liquidator would detect capabilities in an estate imperceptible to the—he would say, more languid—eye of an owner uncoerced. There was no doubt of it. Skillful liquidation operating firmly on Mr. Glencairn's resources would produce a very different figure from this beggarly £400,000. He moved that matters be allowed to take their course, and that the bankruptcy of the Company and Mr. Glencairn offered the solution most in accordance with the interests of the share-holders."

Twenty seconds sprang to their feet; a few dissentient voices were silenced; it was put to the meeting, received with boisterous acclamations, and the chairman had just said, "Lord Germistoun's motion being carried *nem con*—"

when Cosmo rose and interrupted him.

"Before," he said, "the decision of the meeting is recorded, I desire to be heard; and when

I say that I am Mr. Glencairn's son, my claim to a hearing will be admitted. I am not going to follow the example set me by persons in this meeting in the use of intemperate language, nor am I going to hold this meeting collectively responsible for the expressions of individuals in it—expressions used with reference to my father which can only be regarded as the ravings of a sordid panic.

"But now that something like sanity has been restored to the meeting, I challenge these individuals to use and repeat these words to me, if they dare!"

"In answer to Mr. Glencairn's disinterested proposals, there have been shouts of 'Robbery!' and 'Fraud!' Has any one of his traducers the courage to stand up now and repeat these words to me, his son? I will give them time to collect their courage or their common-sense."

He paused: there was a dead silence, but no one rose. Cosmo continued:

"Their common-sense saves me the trouble of refuting them. By their own silence they admit themselves to be slanderers; and I will only say that those who treat the honor of a gentleman with so much levity can have but an indistinct idea of what the honor of a gentleman really is.

"So much for the blatant members of this meeting; but I think that, with a few exceptions, Mr. Glencairn has good reason to complain of the treatment which he has received from this meeting as a whole. Let me contrast his attitude with that of you, the share-holders.

"He and you are parties to a contract made for your mutual benefit, but it proves damaging to both parties. Legally, he is bound to make good the damage; and he makes the most loyal efforts to do so, without an attempt (which would be clearly justifiable) to escape or diminish his liability by pointing to your own culpable neglect which has been at the root of the whole evil. He produces a 'beggarly £400,000,' which it probably cost him a million to raise, and which it probably beggars him to produce. He makes no allusion to another £350,000 of his, sunk in the business which you have ruined. His sacrifice is not less than a million; perhaps it is half as much again; but he makes no reclamations.

"He asks you, fifty men, to *risk* among you, what *is*, by comparison, a beggarly sum—and entirely for your own benefit. His arguments all turn upon your interests. He makes no appeal for himself. He effaces himself altogether. On the other side, what is your attitude? Why, it is that of Shylock clamoring for his pound of flesh! I have heard cries of 'Robbery!' and 'Fraud!' I have heard the pressure of the liquidator suggested as a force superior to the dictates of honor. I will not characterize such conduct. He has asked for nothing, except that you should help yourselves. Neither am I here to ask for anything for him. I will not even ask you to help yourselves; nor will I propose to you a compromise of any sort. Shylock shall have full satisfaction."

Here Lord Germistonne sprang to his legs, and said, "The meeting is, no doubt, willing to make some allowance for the violence of a young man upset by his father's distressing position; but he may rest assured that rhetoric will not affect the decision of this meeting. We are re-

solved that matters should take their course. What we desire is our money, and not offensive parables. There is no more to be said."

"Lord Germistonne," said Cosmo, "will pardon me for contradicting him. There is still something to be said. Had I been aware of my father's inability to meet the full demand, I would have privately offered him such assistance as I could; but I have had no private communication from him. I regret that his reticence to me compels me to make a public exhibition of what ought to have been private and confidential between father and son. I have, however, no alternative. I place all that I have got at his disposal. I find that that amounts to £225,000, all, fortunately, in securities which can be at once realized. That is short by £25,000 of the sum required to annihilate the unfortunate connection between him and the Company; but my own holding in the Company, direct and indirect, amounts to £30,000, so that my property is sufficient, and even leaves a little margin. In my father's name, therefore, I now renounce the contract, and tender you your money in full. And now I agree with Lord Germistonne that there is no more to be said."

Cosmo sat down; and at first there was a dead silence—the silence of astonishment. Then, from a variety of motives—certainly, joy for loss escaped, possibly recognition of Cosmo's generosity—applause burst from the meeting, which clapped its hands and rose and cheered him loudly. The shouts of "Robbery!" and "Fraud!" were replaced by "Generous!" "Splendid!" "Magnanimous!" His indignation and his bitter parable were at once forgotten.

When order was restored, one gentleman after another rose to express his high sense of Cosmo's self-sacrifice. It was an ovation which only threatened to be checked when a share-holder so far suffered enthusiasm to get the better of discretion as to suggest that the meeting should not allow all the sacrifice to be on one side, and proposed that, in acknowledgment of Mr. Glencairn's loyal efforts, and his son's unexampled generosity, they should be invited to accept a return of £25,000; "otherwise," said the speaker, "I fear father and son will be entirely beggared. We know that the business can only be worked at a loss."

Before the meeting had time to discredit itself by a chill response to this, Cosmo again rose, and gratefully but firmly declined to accept the boon. "An act of the sort," he said, "to have any meaning, must be complete." And this drew forth the heartiest cheer of all. The share-holders had got every farthing of their money, and the danger of sentimental reaction had been comfortably overpassed.

When various business formalities had been completed, and when the meeting was about to break up, Lord Germistonne begged to detain them for a moment. A bitter struggle had been going on in his breast between his hatred for Cosmo, and certain embers of generous gentlemanhood which smouldered in his inner consciousness. The latter prevailed, and he rose and said, "The meeting, I think, ought not to separate without offering a formal vote of thanks to the gentleman who has relieved us from our embarrassments. Mr. Cosmo Glencairn well knows that, for private reasons, his actions are not likely to be looked upon by me with a partial

eye. It will therefore, perhaps, make the vote all the more acceptable to him if I propose it, which I now do. His conduct has been distinctly that of a"—(a gulp)—"gentleman of honor and high spirit. I move that the meeting recognizes this and thanks him."

The motion was carried by acclamation. Cosmo rose, and simply said, "I thank you, gentlemen, for your recognition that I have done my duty; and I thank Lord Germistounne for having, in my honor, performed a task which I know must have been unpalatable to him." And so it was all over.

Poor Phil, with tears in his eyes, grasped both Cosmo's hands.

"Dear Cosmo," he said, "I am proud of you! It is glorious!"

"There is nothing glorious about it, Phil. If a man will not give his all to protect his father's reputation from even the possibility of misconception, he is not much of a man, in my opinion. Thank God, I had the money to give!"

"But you have sacrificed *everything*."

"Except honor and duty, Phil. I can, at least, look the world boldly in the face, like your old model 'The Blacksmith.' You and I are both young and strong; we must put our shoulders to the wheel, and hope for better days."

Cosmo telegraphed very fully to his father, and in the course of the evening received this reply—a marvel of length for Mr. Glencairn:

"With your prospects and hopes, I was unwilling to involve you in my loss. You have made too great a sacrifice; but it shows you to be the best of sons and the best of gentlemen. I thank you. Prospects of the iron business are very black, I fear. We shall both have to work hard. Take no steps till my return."

The excitement of the day had, to a certain extent, kept Cosmo up; but now all was over, and reaction set in. His father's telegram closed the sad drama; the final episode was complete, and his ruin was accomplished. Such an accumulation of calamities might well have bowed down the strongest man, and poor Cosmo touched the verge of desperation. It seemed that all was lost. His father's long life of work and enterprise had been lived in vain. His own dreams of love were fading away; his career of honor and usefulness was arrested at the very outset. He must resign everything and commence a life of obscure toil; and was there a hope to gild it?

He did not repent of what he had done; that he had so acted was his only consolation. The world might have called his sacrifice Quixotic, but to him it was a simple and inevitable duty. He did not repent of what he had done, but his heart well-nigh died within him. From a long and sad process of self-communion he rose to write, and when he had finished his task he murmured sadly to himself, "My first letter to her, and too likely to be my last!"

CHAPTER LIV.

THAT evening Lord Germistounne was in high good-humor. His £20,000 were safe. The Glencairns were ruined, and he felt that he himself had behaved like a Christian hero in wrenching from his grudging lips the few words in which

he had acknowledged that the man he hated had done well. A larger nature would have felt some generous pain in profiting by the ruin of any enemy, and especially of one whose action had been so chivalrous. Lord Germistounne was not thus afflicted; he only felt that his own conduct in the affair had been as creditable as its issue had been satisfactory to his pocket. And not to his pocket only; for Cosmo was ruined now; the stepping-stone of wealth was knocked from beneath him; a pauper, and without *prestige*, forced to earn his bread in some obscure calling, he must now sink from the social orbit where contact with Esmè was possible. At last she would see reason, and recognize the stern logic of facts. Yes! at last the Glencairn "scandal" was at an end. His lordship was not vile enough to rejoice in the ruin of any one simply because he hated him; but, in this case, the ruin of the man he hated crushed an influence which was opposed to his dearest wishes and hopes.

He was full of satisfaction, and as he and Esmè were by themselves that evening, he thought he might as well now finally close the subject with her.

Under the circumstances, he was able to speak of Cosmo in a tone of moderation which surprised his daughter at first, and even gave her a little flutter of unreasonable hope, soon to be dispelled.

"You will be glad to know, Esmè," he said, "that the matter I spoke of yesterday, with perhaps some little heat, has been adjusted."

"In what way, papa?" asked Esmè, nerving herself to meet another storm.

"In a very satisfactory way; I have secured my money."

"I am very glad to hear it; and—and Mr. Glencairn, then, is quite exonerated?"

"Hum! well, I don't say that; but I am bound to say that his son has behaved in a manner that was distinctly creditable to him. It surprised me, I admit; but I am always the first to own merit in cases where the ordinary run of men would allow personal feeling to blind them to its existence—ahem!"

"Yes, papa?—and—" said poor Esmè, flushing with pleasure, and anxious to hear more from her father in this happy vein.

"Yes, I repeat that, to my surprise, the young man has behaved like a gentleman, and, I must add, in a very high sense of the term—ahem!"

"Yes, papa? yes?"

"I say so with the less hesitation that it is improbable I shall require to mention his name on any future occasion."

Clouds and darkness again!

"It happened in this way," continued his lordship; "the father was unable to meet our just claims; the bankruptcy of the Company was certain, and our heavy loss was inevitable. Upon this the son stepped in voluntarily, and most properly, and enabled his father to do what was right. Young Glencairn paid us £225,000—a large sum."

"It must have ruined him!" gasped Esmè.

"Entirely so, I apprehend; indeed, I almost think he implied as much."

"And you took his money, and ruined him?—ruined this noble life, that is so full of promise! and stopped his career, which has— Oh, it is too horrible! How could you, papa—how could you?"

"You forget, my dear," said Lord Germistoun, keeping his temper like a saint, "that in business such considerations are excluded. What were this young man's career and promise, and so forth, to the share-holders of the Company?"

"You might have declined your share."

"Ha! ha! my interest in his career is so affectionate! You astonish me, girl. However, you may make your mind easy; he would not have accepted it. At the first whisper of a proposal to recognize his upright conduct by a return of £25,000, he peremptorily declined it, with as much proper dignity, I am bound to say, as if he had been a gentleman."

"As if he had been a gentleman! as if the very facts did not *prove* him to be a gentleman of the very highest type!"

"I meant, a gentleman by birth."

"Oh, that was all!"

"Yes; and now I think it will be well to come to a complete and final understanding about this preposterous affair, which has been making a fool of you and me for months. This Mr. Cosmo Glencairn was a plebeian before, and he is now also a pauper. My consent you never could have obtained, under the most favorable circumstances; and your own sense will show you that, even if I were to go mad and offer it, he would not now be in a position to take advantage of it. He is penniless; his father is practically the same, and will be bankrupt in a month, or I am much mistaken. Now, child, give up delusions. Take a rational and straightforward course—best for yourself, and fairest to this unhappy young man, who now has to struggle with the world, and cannot afford to waste his energy on dreams; take this course: write to him—I will even authorize you to do that, with, of course, the dignity and reserve proper to ladies in such circumstances—write to him and tell him that you see the hopeless folly of this entanglement. He knows it now himself; but he is a dreamer, and may have some high, fantastic notion that he is pledged to you. Tell him that he is free; tell him there is no pledge, and that if there ever was one, I dissolve it by my paternal authority. This will be the greatest kindness you can do him; it is the only kindness I can sanction. I *will* sanction it, however, because he has behaved well in this money matter. Do it, then, and become once again my dear and dutiful daughter."

Lord Germistoun quite astonished himself by the calm and noble elevation of his tone. Such mingled dignity and common-sense! such paternal sweetness and Christian philanthropy! He felt that he was becoming angelic and too good for this sinful world. "You will do it," he resumed, "*to-night*."

"No, papa, I will not do it."

In an instant the seraph was transformed into a raving demon. Angels have fallen before. History repeated itself.

"You will *not* do it!" he shouted, and then atoned for his unnatural calm by a tornado of violent language. "You will *not* do it!" he repeated.

"I will *never* do it! I would far sooner die!" cried Esmè, the proud blood of the Douglas at last aflame beyond control.

"Leave my sight," cried her father, "and don't venture to approach me again to-night!"

Go, I say! Not a word, not a look, unless you wish me to turn you out-of-doors!"

Esmè walked proudly from the room; and if at that moment Cosmo had stood by her side and said, "Come to the shelter of my love!" it is doubtful if filial duty would have said him nay.

As she went slowly up-stairs, a servant followed and gave her a letter. It was addressed in Cosmo's handwriting, and with a step magically quickened she reached her room. In the hour of her bitterest trial, then, her lover's words had come to console her. A forbidden consolation! Forbidden? There are limits to human endurance, and they had been overpassed. She, too, was well-nigh desperate—this tender, loving soul, cast adrift in her agony, friendless, without a whisper of the sympathy which we all need, the hardest and strongest of us, in the hour of supreme affliction—all alone! No wonder she held the letter to her breast and kissed it passionately, feeling, by its very contact, less alone; clasping it as the drowning cling to any waif in the horror and darkness of overwhelming seas. Hoarding her comfort, she thus stood for a long time with the letter unread. At last, when the harvest of anticipation had been fully reaped, she opened it and read as follows:

"I must write to you, my dearest, in spite of all prohibitions. Alas! that my first letter should only have to speak of new sorrows. I need not go into details. I will simply tell you that, after my father had given, as I understand, his whole fortune to fulfil his obligations, it has been necessary for me to come forward with mine, to save him from calumny and persecution. Happily it has been in my power to do so effectually. But, dearest Esmè, it has cost me almost all I possess to do this—virtually *all*; and not merely money, for the loss of it closes my new career, and I must begin life at some lower level, far from the sphere in which you live. You know that wealth and fame appeared to me to be chiefly desirable, inasmuch as they might bring me nearer to you; and I think I could have endured to lose possession of the one and hope of the other with equanimity, but that their loss places an immensely wider gulf between us. Nevertheless, when the choice between duty and love presented itself, how could I hesitate? If I could have done so, surely my love would not have been worth your keeping; you would have justly despised it. I seem to hear your voice assuring me of this. I write to you, darling, because it is right that you should know what has occurred directly from me, lest the surrender of my career, without apparent motive, should pain and bewilder you. It would, I suppose, be conventionally proper were I now to say that you must not any longer regard our betrothal as binding upon you. I cannot say so, however. I feel that to do so would be to wound and dishonor your love. Our troth was plighted 'for ever and ever.' While Time affects us, it binds our spirits together, for joy or sorrow, in hope or in despondency, in bodily separation or in union; and, in hope at least, we contemplate its perpetuation, after Time, forever and forever. Dearest, we have already suffered much. The future is dark. It may be God's will that we suffer much more; but faith and hope will support us, as they have done in the past. In the gloom of our night these stars are

still shining, and they will shine on till the dawn comes. With our eyes fixed on them, let us wait in patience for the morning.

"What more can I say, darling? My love can tell you nothing that you do not know already. It can ask you for nothing that you have not already given. It can promise nothing that is not included in my undying devotion. Farewell, my own dearest Esmè! I am your own forever,
COSMO GLENCAIRN."

It was true that the letter told her nothing which she did not already know; it only placed before her in calm, sad words the new aspect of their love and grief; but its influence, if not cheering, was at least soothing and strengthening. The steadfastness of Cosmo's tone, and the far-reaching scope which he pictured for their love, seemed for the moment to dwarf the dimensions of their present trials, and carried her eyes forward to a glowing future of union certain to come, soon or late, but *certain* to come, and then to last always, here and in those other realms where "the voice of weeping" shall not be heard. Her lover's letter bore her bravely up in that climax of her misery; but, alas! such high contemplations will not, in real life, endure the strain of many a weary day. Beautiful are the Elysian plains, but far, far away; and close beside us there are other plains, with bloom and fragrance to touch our human sense, and fill our human hearts with longing; and suffering human love cannot remain long content to stand on the passionless heights, and gaze upon the far horizons. "Love is of the valley." With all their fortitude and pious faith, the sufferings of these poor lovers were neither few nor small.

CHAPTER LV.

MR. GLENCAIRN lingered in Paris, completing the transaction which had conveyed back into his own hands the wreck of his splendid business, and desperately endeavoring to discover in the locked-up remains of his fortune some symptoms that they might, by-and-by, yield a little assistance toward restoring the capabilities of the undertaking. He wrote to Cosmo that he was thinking out a scheme for him, but it was not yet in a practical shape; and earnestly counselled him to retain his seat in the House, at all events till his return and till the end of the session. "The surest way to make ruin irrecoverable is," he said, "to acknowledge it. Your retirement now would simply be to advertise it." Cosmo's future plans thus remained in abeyance, and he had to endure an irksome suspense, instead of plunging into the abyss and sounding its lowest depths, which instinct prompts us to do when inevitable calamity is impending.

Hopper wrote, from his "so-to-speak" seclusion, several letters of grotesque but probably sincere regret for the ruin his madness had induced. He offered to Mr. Glencairn his services in the working of the firm for the term of his natural life, gratuitously, or, if he might so say, for a crust. Failing this, he was, he said, prepared, on the same terms, to become Mr. Glencairn's bondsman, enumerating a vast variety of services which he would "greedily render," and which included the hewing of wood, the

drawing of water, the blacking of boots, the breaking of stones, and other menial duties proverbially associated with penitence and retribution. Mr. Glencairn vouchsafed no answer to any of these tempting offers.

The story of Cosmo's ruin and generosity got abroad, and meandered through Clubland in various aspects of transformation. It was filtered to the profane public through the omniscient columns of the weekly "socials" thus: "I regret to learn that poor C. G.'s losses are as heavy as I feared. I was dining last night with Jam Haverel at the 'Gastronomic' (where, *par parenthèse*, the new chef is a *cordon bleu*), and Jam assured me that he had the facts from C.'s own stock-broker. *Enfin*, every one is sorry. Cosmo goes on the operatic stage, and will make his *débüt* as Raoul.

'Minuentur atræ,
Carmine curæ.'

So mote it be!"

And again thus: "History has been repeating itself! Pious Æneas has been carrying poor old Anchises off upon his shoulders again, but he has tumbled this time under the paternal fardel and smashed his knees. I hear he is likely to become prime minister to the Pijwam of Nambou, who, *on dit*, owes Anchises a pretty handsome penny."

So that society knew as much about Cosmo's misfortune as he knew himself, and was altogether ahead of him in regard to his future career; but his calm exterior and continued attendance at the House puzzled the hungrier gossips who have appetite for more than a nine days' wonder, and his reserve repelled the questions and the sympathy of all save his nearest intimates, who were very few in number. Among these, of course, by the eternal law of contrast, was Tom Wyedale, whose disinterested regrets were pointed by many personal considerations.

The moment he heard the ill news, he went down to the "Kakodæmon," and summarily borrowed £150 from Bobus Packer, who had recently been elected a member in consideration of his half a million of money, which had been held to cancel certain social disabilities under which Bobus labored. Thence repairing to the "Gastronomic," he similarly levied upon another *nouveau riche*, who had lately been admitted as a Gastronomer under similar conditions of generous forbearance, and with the £300 thus amassed he betook him to Cosmo's rooms. After expressing the heartiest grief and sympathy, he proceeded to say, "It has only just occurred to me, my dear Cosmo, that I have been in your debt for more than a year. I dare say you've forgotten all about it; but at Cadenabbia, last summer, I borrowed £280 of you, and it would be monstrous in me to keep you out of it a moment longer now; so here it is for you, with many thanks and apologies."

"This is very thoughtful, of you, Tom," said Cosmo. "I have not yet realized what it is to be poor; but of course I know I ought to take it. Still, you are always in straits, and if this is too heavy a draw upon you, you can keep the money for the present."

"No, no, Cosmo," cried Tom, "I insist. Make your mind easy; the difference it will make to me is quite trifling." Which was

really very true, Tom's little temporary profit on the transaction being only twenty pounds—represented by the excess of Bobus & Co.'s contributions over the sum now tendered to his friend.

"Very well, then, I'll take it. Thank you, Tom; you are a good, kind fellow," said Cosmo. And Tom really fancied he was. "Deuced hard," he thought to himself, "if I were to let a little false delicacy stand between poor Cosmo and his money. Cosmo is more to me than many thousand Bobuses, and I was clearly bound to make some sacrifice of pride on his behalf. And, after all, if these bloated snobs are not to pay *something* for the privilege of coming among us, why admit them? What becomes of reciprocity?"

CHAPTER LVI.

DURING all this time Sir Robert Glencairn had been steadily declining in health and strength, and all this time Cosmo had been most dutiful in his attentions, visiting him daily, and when the financial catastrophe occurred, carefully keeping the knowledge of it from his uncle, lest, in his feeble state, the intelligence should injuriously affect his health.

Mr. Glencairn, however, frustrated his son's thoughtfulness. Perhaps affliction had somewhat softened the former; at all events, about ten days after the explosion, he wrote to his brother expressing regret that he had been unable to see him before he left England; fully explaining the causes which had taken him abroad, and which were still likely to detain him for some time upon the Continent, and reporting in warm terms Cosmo's fine act of self-sacrifice. The results of this sudden disclosure were as serious as Cosmo had feared they might be. Fiery and autocratic, Sir Robert had at the same time a large substratum of simplicity and affectionateness in his nature, and his only brother's calamity caused him infinite distress. Then, though his own high spirit sympathized with Cosmo's act of devotion, it appeared to him to threaten something like the final disappointment of what had been, almost to monomania, the aspiration of his life. On the occasion of Cosmo's first visit after the disclosure he found his uncle in an alarming state of prostration. He spoke slowly and with difficulty; all his brusque eccentricity had left him; he was pathetically subdued and gentle. He handed to Cosmo his father's letter, saying, "You will see from that that I know all." Cosmo glanced his eye over the letter, and then said, "I am grieved, uncle, that you should have had this trouble intruded upon you when you are so unwell. I concealed it from you purposely."

"You are a very good fellow, Cosmo," was the reply, "but why should I not suffer with my own kith and kin? I have been a lonely man all my life, and, I fear, a selfish one. The end of my life is very near; during what remains of it, it is well that I should share in all things with my family. I have saved a little money; *that* and my pension your father and you will share with me while I live—not for business purposes, but for your personal wants. I have made my will, and left you my small fortune. I have settled it so that you cannot again sacrifice yourself

to your generosity; not that I blame you for what you have done—God forbid I should do that! If your father is in need of money, you will, I know, give him what he requires out of the income, just as I will do myself while I live. Ah, Cosmo, I fear all our investigations are hopeless now! Nevertheless, I wish you to continue in Parliament, if possible, where, I think, you will do credit to our pedigree, short or long. Besides, something *may* yet turn up, who knows? and in any case, and on every account, I wish you to be in a position to which you are entitled. I cannot help seeing in your recent conduct another strong piece of internal evidence. The money I have to leave is only about £25,000. I don't make obedience to my wish a condition of inheriting it; but, if you find it practicable, I *do* wish you to follow out a political career. Will you?"

"If it is at all practicable, uncle, I shall certainly respect your wishes, which are quite in unison with my own."

"I have a fancy," continued the old man, "that I should like to be buried in Scotland. It is, at all events, our fatherland. You will respect that wish too?"

"You are low to-day, uncle, and depressed; don't let us talk of such lugubrious subjects. I hope it will be many a day before that wish has to be considered."

"But you will remember it?"

"How can you doubt it?"

"And if the discovery ever should be made—I if the home of our race is ever identified—I should like to think that my ashes will be removed, so that they may mingle with those of our ancestors. You may think this an idle whim—the caprice of a dying man; but, depend upon it, it is the instinct of long descent which prompts the wish; and you will respect it also?"

"I will, uncle," said Cosmo, wondering at the tenacity with which this fixed idea clung to the old man's brain, under all circumstances of discouragement.

"I am tired now," continued Sir Robert, "and I think I could sleep; so I will not ask you to stay longer to-day. But be sure you come to-morrow. You are a very fine fellow, and have been a great comfort to me. Good-bye, and God bless you!"

The next morning, before Cosmo was dressed, his uncle's servant came to his rooms.

"Sir Robert has had a very restless night, sir," he said, "and he is very weak this morning. The doctor desired me to say he thinks you ought to come as soon as possible. He considers that Sir Robert is sinking very fast."

Cosmo made all haste, and was soon at his uncle's chambers. The doctor met him at the bedroom door, and detained him outside for a moment. "Your uncle," he said, "has had a slight paralytic stroke; but, in his reduced condition, I can hold out no hope that he will rally from it. In fact, I fear that he will not survive the day."

"Is he conscious? Will he know me?" asked Cosmo.

"It is hard to say; but I am afraid it is certain that he will never speak to you again."

They entered the room. The poor old man lay very still; his breathing was quick but faint; one arm lay powerless by his side; his other

hand twitched the bedclothes with aimless, persistent restlessness, and his open eyes had that look, half vague, half solemn, of appeal or inquiry which accompanies the approach of death. He slightly moved them in the direction of those who entered, showing that he was still, or again, conscious. His nephew bent over him, and, taking his hand, said, "Do you know me, dear uncle?" His eyes were turned upon Cosmo's with the same vague look of appeal, but he neither spoke nor made any sign.

"Can nothing be done?" asked Cosmo.

"Nothing," said the doctor. "He is without suffering; that is all the comfort I can give you; but it is unnecessary that I should remain." He felt the dying man's pulse, and added, "A very few hours more!"

Cosmo sat down by the bedside to wait for the end. All through the day his vigil lasted. His uncle was little more than a stranger to him, and his own nature was not prone to rapid expansions, so that violent grief could not be expected of him. But there was much that was touching in this lonely close of a life which the dying man had himself described as lonely; in this desolate end to aspirations which he had cherished so feverishly but a few short weeks before; and with this moving spectacle before him Cosmo's heart was stirred to genuine compassion. In the long hours of solemn thought, while his uncle's vitality ebbed gradually away, his own special calamities faded, for the time, out of sight. By degrees his mind passed to larger contemplations of the pathos of human life and the vanity of human wishes, and then rose to that higher sphere of hope whence the eye of Faith descends, for the shortness and sadness of life, a recompense on the farther side of Time—

"Where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

Thus the day passed. Toward evening Cosmo felt his uncle's hand tighten its grasp on his own, and, looking at him, saw that the expression of his eyes had changed to one of anxious meaning and intelligence; and at the same time he was obviously making an effort to articulate. His nephew bent down close to him, but for some time he could collect no sense from his murmurs, reiterated over and over again, in a faint and hollow monotone. At last he caught the word "Bible," and, looking round, saw, on the table near the bed, the old pocket-Bible which Phil Denwick had given to Sir Robert. Imagining that his uncle wished him to read from it, he took it up; but again his hand was pressed, and again the dying man resumed his painful attempts to speak, and at length succeeded in audibly pronouncing the word "Heirloom."

"You wish that this Bible should be preserved as an heirloom in our family?" said Cosmo, speaking with slow distinctness. The old man pressed his hand by way of assent, and Cosmo assured him that his wish should be sacred. His grasp then relaxed, he made no further effort to speak, and his eyes resumed their former vague expression. Another hour passed, and then the light faded from them, suddenly and forever.

It was late when Cosmo returned to his own rooms that night. The events of the day had been saddening, the tension had been protracted, and he was worn out and thoroughly depressed. In this condition, when his own affairs again re-

turned to his thoughts, the death of his uncle appeared to bear upon his destiny with a very different significance from that which it really possessed. As a matter of fact, it clearly benefited Cosmo, by opening to him the inheritance of at least a modest competency; but he had not as yet realized what the importance of this was. He had never known poverty, and his descent into it was as yet only felt by anticipation, and exclusively in its relation to the disappointment of certain dearest wishes. Under these circumstances, what are called "worldly considerations" were not included in the view which he took of his uncle's death. That event simply appeared to him to be another element in the general desolation which was closing around him—the severance of another link, frail and shadowy as it was, which connected him with the idea of a hope now rapidly vanishing. He felt terribly alone. His heart had learned, by the experience of love, to long with intensity for sympathy and tenderness; but upon the mountainous obstacles which already intervened between him and Esmé another mountain had lately piled its bulk. As for his father, he was cold and self-sufficing; and even when Cosmo's heart had gone forth to him in the hour of mutual calamity, its advances had been chilled by silence or by words of formal reciprocity.

The death of this old man, then—of this old man whom he might have learned to love, and whose nature was far more in sympathy with his own—simply seemed, as we have said, to add another drop to the cup of his desolate loneliness, which was already full to the brim.

Love, family ties, wealth, fame, ambition, the eager wish to stand in the fore-front of the battle for everything which makes nations great and good—over all these the dark waters of destiny seemed to pour their obliterating tide. A weariness, a sickness of life, took possession of him; he declined from the high level of Christian stoicism on which he had passed his vigil in the death-chamber. The words of inspiration brought him no comfort; only such as were darkest came to the darkened chambers of his soul, which echoed with the dreary questions of the Man of Uz, with the despairing summations of the mournful Preacher—"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery? and life unto the bitter in soul?" "All the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

He had brought away his uncle's Bible—the heirloom; it lay upon the table before him, and he took it up and opened it. On the fly-leaf he beheld the motto, "Search the Scriptures," and he turned over the pages, searching in them for the key-note of some happier strain of thought. At last he lighted on a striking passage, which suggested a long train of speculations, ending in a reverie; and in the midst of this the Bible slipped from his absent hand and fell to the ground. It fell open, with its leaves downward, and Cosmo hastily stooped and picked it up. The leaves were deranged by the accident, and he was readjusting them, when his eye was attracted by some faintish writing upon one of the central pages. With only a languid interest he approached the light to decipher the words, which were written on the blank side of the title-page of the New Testament. They were as follows:

"Whereas I, the Honorable Norman Douglas, third son of Archibald, 12th Baron of Dunerlacht, have married you, Jean Lothian, on this first day of June, 1781, in the parish of Greyfriars, in Edinburgh, under the name of Norman Glencairn; and whereas you have doubts and scruples whether this wedlock be true and fast, being contracted under a name assumed by me, but not registered—I do now, therefore, before God and upon this his Holy Book, formally take and acknowledge you to be my wife, under the name of Norman Douglas. This name I have abjured and renounced, and I now retake, and use, and admit it to be my name, solely for this one occasion and purpose: *videlicet*—to satisfy your conscience and scruples, and to assure you of my real faith in all ways. To this I place my signature—Norman Douglas, or Glencairn."

Underneath, the anxious wife had made assurance doubly sure by writing:

"For the second time, this 1st June, 1781, I, Jean Glencairn or Lothian, take you, Norman Glencairn, to be my husband, and now under your lawful name of Norman Douglas; and I sign my name—Jean Douglas or Glencairn or Lothian."

A mist came before Cosmo's eyes, and the beating of his pulses sounded in his ears like the roar of many waters or the shouting of a vast multitude. For a few seconds he was virtually unconscious; and though, when he had somewhat recovered his self-possession, he read and re-read the startling revelation, it was only after much time that he had anything but a confused sense of what it imported. At first he appeared to be watching the evolution of a romantic mystery, which in no way concerned him. The very identity of Norman Douglas with his own progenitor Norman Glencairn he could only realize with difficulty; and when that was done, he could hardly retain fixed in his conviction that he himself was transformed into Cosmo Douglas.

Then—"Douglas," "Dunerlacht," "Douglas!"—he repeated the names over and over again with a stupefied air, as if trying to recall some association with the words which was eluding the grasp of his memory. Such a sudden and utter revolution in regard to all the leading ideas and interests of his life might well bewilder him, and make it a matter hard to his apprehension, that he himself shared the proud lineage which Lord Germistounne had so haughtily described as placing an impassable barrier between Esmé and a suitor of obscure origin. With the minute history of the Dunerlacht family he was not familiar, though he did remember that Lord Germistounne was also 15th Baron Dunerlacht; but in what degree of relationship he himself, as descendant of the 12th Baron, thus stood to the present representative of the family, he was not aware.

It could not, however, be remote; but, near or remote, the lineage and blood were the same. At last, from all confusions and bewilderments, this supreme fact shone before his eyes. The dawn had begun to break at last. A world of delight opened before his eyes. The grand obstacle of birth had ceased to separate him from Esmé; the contemptuous disregard to which defects of origin had exposed his own personal qualities was no longer possible. For his love there was blissful hope; for his pride, which

chafed against the obliteration of individuality by a social brand, there was a sovereign balm. Hard to realize all this; hard to believe in so comprehensive a transformation; but, once grasped, it may well be imagined that for a time all other sublimary considerations faded out of view: a time which was of long duration; for, all night through, Cosmo paced his room, turning again and again from one to another of the new aspects of his life, and finding at each recurrence some accession of delight. It was only when the cold natural dawn stole into his chamber that a check was given to the warmth of his enthusiasm; and then, from a hundred Alnaschar-like dreams, he awoke.

It was much for him to find that he was of noble birth; the distinction was dear to him from many points of view; but the cold voice of the dawn asked him whether the discovery did, after all, remove every obstacle to his hopes. And the answer, alas! could be but this—that the removal of one disability had been anticipated by the substitution of another. A month ago he possessed the advantage of wealth cancelled by obscurity of birth, and now his faultless lineage was neutralized by poverty.

However much Lord Germistounne might recognize the abstract virtue of a pedigree, which he, of all men, could not possibly undervalue, that by no means involved his admission that a comparatively penniless cadet of the family could be considered a suitable match for the daughter of the chief—for the heiress of the family honors and possessions. He felt all this now; and though there was still much to be thankful for, he bitterly appreciated the irony of Fate.

Next, with a pang of shame and remorse, he remembered his uncle, all thought of whose death had been swept from his mind by the very discovery which the poor old man had longed, and hoped, and worked for all his life. He remembered that for his uncle, too, the irony of Fate was cruel—more cruel than in his own case, from the apt moment of its development and the conclusiveness of its action. Bitterly reproaching himself, he was touched by that remorseful desire to atone to the neglected dead, which often moves men to pay an instant and more reverent obedience to the last wishes of those who have gone. He recalled his uncle's last injunctions; he had expressed but two. Of these there was little fear that that which referred to the Bible would be neglected; little fear that it would cease to be an heirloom in the family, the charter of whose resuscitation had been drawn from its sacred guardianship.

His uncle's other wish—that he should be laid to his final rest among the ashes of his forefathers, if the place of their sepulture ever became known—he now resolved to take immediate steps to carry into effect.

To do this, it was necessary that he should at once apprise Lord Germistounne of the kinship between their families, which had been so strangely brought to light. Before he lay down, therefore, he wrote the following letter to his lordship—writing, as may be imagined, with a haste and agitation which excluded the consideration of minute details:

"25th July, 18—."

"MY LORD,—I have to announce to you the death of my uncle, Sir Robert Glencairn (proper-

ly Douglas), which took place last night, at his chambers in Pall Mall, after a few weeks' illness. His death has been immediately followed by a discovery of vital interest to me, and which cannot be altogether indifferent to you. It has transpired, beyond doubt, that our family name is Douglas, and that we are entitled to it in right of our descent from Norman Douglas, otherwise Glencairn, who was third son of Archibald, twelfth Baron Dunerlacht. The discovery is not many hours old, and I have had no time to ascertain in what exact degree of relationship it proves my late uncle to have stood to your lordship. That it must be pretty close, however, is obvious; but, even had it been very remote, I would still have ventured to trouble you with this letter. The day before his death, my uncle, who had all his life entertained the strongest desire to penetrate a mystery in which our origin was involved, expressed to me the wish that should it ever be cleared up, he might, if it were possible, be interred in the burial-place of our ancestors. That wish is, of course, sacred to me; and I feel confident that so natural an aspiration will recommend itself to your lordship's sympathy, and that you will be glad, as chief of the family, to grant the sanction, and give the directions, which will enable me to carry it into effect. To ask for this is my sole object in now writing to you. This is not the occasion to allude to other bearings of the discovery; but I cannot be wrong, I think, in expressing a hope that, whatever difference has unfortunately existed between us, your lordship will see nothing in my past conduct which can discredit my present request, by making you ashamed to recognize my kinship. I have the honor to be your lordship's obedient servant,

"COSMO DOUGLAS

"(Formerly GLENCAIRN)."

Cosmo then wrote a second letter to his father, announcing the discovery which had been made shortly after the despatch of a previous one, in which he had reported his uncle's death. He also explained the step which he had consequently taken with regard to the funeral, and begged his father to return at once, if it were at all practicable. When his writing was finished he lay down to rest, but not before the sun had long been up.

CHAPTER LVII.

If the proverbial thunder-bolt had fallen through the roof of Lord Germistoun's business-room, it could hardly have produced a more agitating effect upon the noble occupant than did the perusal of Cosmo's letter. In the former case, however, it would have been the agitation of fear; in this it was simply wrath, but wrath intensified to such a pitch that it almost paralyzed the patient. He sat glaring at the letter, livid, trembling, and speechless. We have seen him in not a few transports of the sort, but only of the sort; for this, in degree, probably surpassed any previous passion which had fired the combustible spirit of the old gentleman. "Glencairn! Glencairn! Glencairn!" were the first words he uttered, after a long interval of dumb frenzy; and then, his voice being again

available, he poured forth such volleys of miscellaneous malediction as proved the perfection to which the art of cursing may be brought if a long life is conscientiously devoted to its culture. This Glencairn family appeared to him, in his present mood, to be some emanation from the infernal regions, let loose for the express purpose of outraging and exasperating Viscount Germistoun; and a long list of their persecutions was crowned by this last supreme act of almost impious audacity. One of them had wounded his dignity by personal slight and insult, and placed large moneys of his in grievous jeopardy. The other had practised upon his daughter with diabolical arts of love, ensnared her affections, perverted her obedient spirit, and lifted his own daring eyes to an alliance with the august house of Germistoun. It might have been supposed that this would exhaust them; but no! the Glencairn pertinacity in evil and torment was a very Hydra—defeated at one point, it rose rampant at another. The attempt on his money (he put it thus) had miscarried; he had foiled the matrimonial design, at the expense of grievous personal annoyance, trouble, and anxiety; and now here was a deliberate scheme to degrade that which was, in his eyes, most sacred of all, by boldly advancing a claim to kinship! What sort of a claim? founded upon what? Why, on the ground of their descent from a blackguard waif of the family, whose debaucheries had been notorious—a claim which might, no doubt, be made with equal justice by swarms of similar descendants, born, under hedges or in workhouses, of nameless and degraded mothers. By heavens! this was getting past all bounds of human patience! Burial, too! burial among the hallowed dust of the Douglasses, for the illegitimate bones of this infernal old Indian impostor! Lord Germistoun felt that it was almost a case for the police; and, at all events, that if justice had anything to do with the moral government of the universe, something must happen to these vampires before long.

Hours elapsed before he was calm enough to write in the strain of awful but judicial severity which he believed to be his *forte*; and then he indited the following response to Cosmo:

"—, July 18—

"SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, announcing the death of a person whom you describe as 'Sir Robert Glencairn (properly Douglas),' and requesting that the privilege of interment in my family burying-ground may be accorded to his remains.

"It seems improbable that you should have been distraught by grief on account of the death of the individual in question; but, either from that or some other circumstance, I presume you to have been suffering from mental alienation at the moment when you permitted yourself to pen that monstrous effusion. On no other hypothesis can I account for it.

"It seems almost a waste of words to negative a request of the sort; but, as it is preferred in a serious tone, I pay it the compliment of a grave refusal. And when I have done so, I have said all that is strictly necessary; but I will, nevertheless, add one or two brief observations. You have displayed, on a recent occasion, the spirit of a gentleman, which I cheerfully recognized at

the time; and if the same spirit continues in some degree to actuate you, you will, I think, see the propriety of discontinuing the use of the name which you appear to have adopted—only, let me hope, in the moment of frenzy with which I have above credited you. Admitting the possibility of your illegitimate descent from a member of my family who disgraced it and himself, let me point out that the etiquette which guides men of good feeling in your position prompts them to adopt the name, not of the male, but of the female parent or progenitor, from whom an irregular and discreditable origin is derived. The law, I believe, without recognizing the *right* of persons in your position to any name at all, sanctions in some sort of way, or perhaps I should say connives at, their adoption of the female surname. I know not whether the name of 'Glencairn' were adopted on this principle, but if that be not the name borne by your irregular progenitrix, I would suggest that you should now discard it—not for the name of Douglas, but for that of the female in question, which, if she were at any time within the pale of ecclesiastical discipline, may probably be preserved in the disciplinary records of the parish where she lived. This would be to place yourself in, at least, a *quasi*-legal position. Be that as it may, persistence on your part in the assumption of the name of Douglas might possibly compel me to expose the impertinence in the public prints; and I shall do so, without fail, if it ever comes to my knowledge that you venture to impute to me the scandal of kinship with yourself. I am your obedient servant, GERMISTOUNE.

"P.S.—A more monstrous pretension was, perhaps, never before advanced."

Cosmo did not receive this notable effusion till late at night, and he answered it on the instant.

The next morning Esmè happened to reach the breakfast-room before her father had made his appearance, and, while awaiting his arrival, she took up the advertisement sheet of the *Times*, and read, in the obituary list, an announcement which interested but much perplexed her. It ran as follows:

"At his chambers, in Pall Mall, on the —th inst., in the 65th year of his age, Sir Robert Douglas (formerly Glencairn), K.C.S.I., late Commissioner of Sirapoore, Bengal, great-grandson of Archibald, 12th Baron Dunerlacht."

When Lord Germistoun entered, Esmè, with the paper still in her hand, exclaimed, with a vivacity now unusual in her dealings with her father,

"Oh, papa, we seem to have lost a relation I never heard of before. It is very strange."

"What do you mean?"

"There is the death of a Sir Robert Douglas, formerly Glencairn, announced here."

"Is every one who chooses to call himself 'Douglas' necessarily a relation of ours?"

"No; but he is described as great-grandson of Archibald, 12th Baron Dunerlacht. What does it mean, if he were not our relation?"

"Mean? It means an imposition—a swindle—a lie; that's what it means!"

"But who was this Sir Robert Douglas in reality?"

"Ah! read his alias."

"Glencairn, said Esmè, utterly bewildered.

"Yes, 'Glencairn'; you have some reason to blush when you read it."

"But—but—"

"He was brother to the man who tried to fleece me of my money; he was uncle to the individual who has virtually robbed me of my daughter's loyalty and affection; he was a third scoundrel of the same accursed gang!"

"This is cruelly unjust, papa."

"Be silent! What new villany have they started now? Why, a claim to kinship with me—with me!—on the ground of an alleged illegitimate descent from a blackguard cadet of our family! And not content with that, this Mr. Cosmo Glencairn completes a long series of outrages by calmly requesting me to admit my 'kinsman' (the reprobate just defunct!)—to admit him to the right of burial among the old lords of Dunerlacht! By heavens! it's enough to make the old lords get up and leave the vaults in disgust! But I dare say you'll defend it. Upon my life, I think you will! Do you? Do you dare? What? Answer me!"

"I think it is natural to wish to be buried among one's own people," said Esmè, speaking like one in sleep, and from the midst of some wild and wondrous dream. Before her father had time to open new vials of wrath upon her, a servant entered and brought him a letter, addressed in a handwriting which caused his lordship to pause and hastily tear it open. It was Cosmo's letter, and Lord Germistoun tore it open with a sort of gluttonous desire to stimulate his ferocity with some new incentive. He was apparently disappointed. Certainly the letter, which ran as follows, did not produce this effect, but indeed a strangely different one:

"—, July, 18—

"MY LORD,—I do not think it would be seemly in me to protract a controversy as to the burial of my uncle, Sir Robert Douglas. I will therefore make other provisional arrangements for his interment, and I have, on that subject, no further remarks to offer.

"As to the general tone and tenor of your letter, I feel that, though they are offensive, I am not logically entitled to resent them, since they are based on a misconception of facts so great that they are virtually not addressed to me at all, but to a non-existent person.

"Absolute proof of my legitimate descent from Norman Douglas is in my possession; and no strong asseverations will discredit it. Let me add that, failing my father's action in the matter, I shall anticipate your action as to publicity by at once advertising my resumption of our family name—of which your lordship may be assured that I am as proud as yourself—and the advertisement will report the evidence which justifies the resumption. I shall thus place myself, not, to use your own expression, 'in a *quasi*-legal position,' but in the only position tolerable to a gentleman who considers that the fair fame of his progenitors ought to be sacred in his eyes.

"Your lordship will, of course, see in the advertisement the evidence above alluded to, but I need not say that should you wish to examine the originals, or the certified copies from marriage registers, etc., they are open to your inspection. At the same time, any attempt on your

part to discredit the legality of my resumption of the family name will compel me, with regret, to have recourse to legal measures for redress and refutation. I have the honor to be your lordship's obedient servant, COSMO DOUGLAS."

By the time Lord Germistounne had finished reading the above every vestige of color had left his face. He folded up the letter with hands that shook as if palsied, and sat down to the breakfast-table, touching the articles about him in an absent, mechanical way, while his features worked spasmodically.

His daughter was anxiously observing him, when he rose and staggered, rather than walked, toward the door. Esmè sprang up and ran to him, with a cry of alarm.

"Papa! dear papa! what is wrong? Let me help you; let me—"

He turned on her with a ghastly face and wild eyes, and waved her off, muttering, "Don't dare to follow me!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

A FEW hours after Lord Germistounne's breakfast had been disturbed by the arrival of Cosmo's letter, Tom Wyedale was leisurely enjoying the same meal at his club; and, in the intervals of gossiping with other breakfasters, he glanced at a newspaper which was conveniently propped upon the table in front of him. Presently his eye fell on the announcement of Sir Robert Glencairn's death, which had perplexed Esmè, and which now almost as much bewildered Tom. "Cosmo's uncle, of course," he thought to himself. "There can't have been two Sir Robert Glencairns living in the same rooms in Pall Mall; but, hang it! why 'Douglas?' and how 'great-grandson of the 12th Baron Dunerlacht?' Either poor Cosmo has at last gone mad, or some fiend has been playing a practical joke on him, to make yet more mischief between him and old Germistounne. Yes, that must be it. A woman, of course. It's too bad! upon my life it is too bad!"

When Tom had finished his breakfast he went up-stairs to the library, and attentively studied the history of the Germistounne-Dunerlacht family, in Burke's Peerage. After which, he decided to go and call Cosmo's attention to the obituary notice. "He must take *some* notice of it," he said to himself; "malicious chaff of that sort ought to be jumped upon heavily."

A very few minutes brought Tom to his friend's room, and, saddening his face discreetly to suit the occasion, he entered. Cosmo was busily writing, but looked up and bade his visitor "Good-morning." "I won't stop an instant," said the latter, "if you are too much occupied."

"To tell you the truth, Tom, I am excessively busy. Perhaps you could come back by-and-by."

"Certainly; but I have just half a dozen words to say, which won't keep you an instant. Poor uncle's gone, I hear?"

"Yes—poor old gentleman—the night before last."

"Premature, I suppose, to speculate about his little—a—testamentary arrangements?"

"Scarcely decent, perhaps; but I may tell you that there is no mystery about them at all."

"My dear Cosmo, I do hope Sir Robert has been loyal? Excuse the question; you know my affectionate interest."

"I don't quite understand you; but I believe my uncle has kindly left me all he had to leave, if that is what you mean."

"I am awfully glad to hear it! There is always a risk about uncles of that sort, you see. Satan is so apt to suggest a religious charity to a solitary old man when he is making his will. This is really charming: and since he *was* to die, he has timed his death so admirably!"

"Well, Tom, that is not the way I care to consider the subject. If you have nothing important to say, I fear I must ask you to let me go on with my work."

"I *have* something important to say. Have you seen that scandalous notice of his death in the papers?"

"Scandalous notice? No! Where?"

"In the *Times*. Here it is. Look!"

"There is nothing scandalous about it. I inserted it myself."

"My dear Cosmo!" exclaimed Tom, searching in his friend's face for symptoms of lunacy.

"Well, it is a simple statement of facts."

"But 'Dunerlacht?' and 'Douglas?' Have I now the privilege of talking to Mr. Cosmo Douglas, then?"

"Certainly."

"Oh Lord! this is beyond me. When did the transformation scene take place?"

"I discovered the history of our family immediately after my uncle's death."

"Well, Cosmo, my dear fellow, it can't possibly be a very creditable kind of descent. I do think you were wrong, under the circumstances, to mix the poor old man up with the name. He wouldn't have liked it."

"What do you mean?"

"That ought to be *my* question. Well, you must know that when I saw the newspaper notice, I took the trouble to get hold of 'Burke' and hunt up the Dunerlacht history, and, you mustn't be angry with me for saying so, old fellow, but it really is impossible that you can be descended from the 12th Lord Dunerlacht."

"I know, however, that I am."

"No, no; not legitimately."

"I have the proofs in this room."

"In that case you must be—your father, at least, must be—Lord Dunerlacht. You don't claim that, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Then you can't claim the descent at all. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll just rush into Bobus Packer's, two doors off, and borrow his 'Burke' for a minute, and show you. His father was what Lord Germistounne calls 'a flagrant huckster,' and he is sure to have a 'Burke.' I sha'n't be a moment."

Tom was off and back immediately, with the volume in question.

"Now, Cosmo," he cried, "here is the place; but listen, and I'll read you off a *résumé* of it, as I've been over the ground before. Listen:

"The 12th Lord had three sons—Archibald, George, and Norman. *None* of them survived him. He was succeeded by his *only* grandson, George—the only child of George, his second

son. Very well; young George, the 13th baron, died, in his youth, unmarried. The title then went back to a nephew of the 12th baron, who thus became 14th baron, and, having received the British peerage of Germistounne, was succeeded, on his death, by Archibald, 2d Viscount Germistounne and 15th Baron Dunerlacht—our not altogether satisfactory old friend. All this is as clear as daylight; so that you see, Cosmo, there is really no one for you to descend from—no one, at least, who was married."

"I am descended from Norman."

"Who died unmarried?"

"The proofs of his marriage are in this room."

"In that case your father is Lord Dunerlacht."

"Nonsense! Here, look at the proofs, and a short *résumé* of the case to connect them, which I had from my uncle's lips."

Tom carefully examined them, and presently looked up with an expression of eager astonishment. "Then—then, by George! Cosmo, there's no error about it. These proofs seem to establish the marriage, and the marriage being established, your father is the 15th Baron Dunerlacht, as certainly as I am not."

"I—I don't understand," faltered Cosmo.

"Hang it, man, take the book and use your common-sense. Read it: I should think it's the pleasantest bit of reading you ever did in your life. I suppose there is no doubt that a man's great-grandson is his heir, rather than his grand-nephew?"

"Yes, of course he is."

"Well, then, read, mark, and learn that your father becomes Lord Dunerlacht, *vice* the Right Honorable Jupiter Tonans, who retires upon an allowance, retaining his rank as Viscount Germistounne—and his Thistle:—we must leave him his Thistle."

Cosmo examined the book, and re-examined it, and at last said, "I can scarcely credit my own eyes; but if this book is authentic—if there is no mistake—"

"How *can* there be? The facts are supplied by Lord Germistounne himself."

"Then it is—it must be, as you say; but—what will happen?"

"The first thing that happens is that I offer you the right hand of fellowship, and hail you 'the Master of Dunerlacht!' The next thing is that old Germistounne will lie down on his back and kick, and bite, and struggle, with all the forms of law, to resist eviction. The next thing is that he will be evicted. The next—oh! all sorts of glorious events will happen, in a mellow future. The eye of prophecy grows clear, and I can see—among other things—about sundown, on the 12th of August, next year, two graceful yet manly forms slowly descending the hills which overhang the beautiful valley of the Erlacht. They are in earnest converse. The less attractive of the two appears to plead with his handsomer companion, who at last replies, with a winning smile, 'Well, well; so be it! I'll throw them all over. Hang the duke! I'll disappoint him, and stay with you till the end of the season. I'm not the selfish beast people say.' The speaker is Thomas Wyedale, Esquire, and he addresses his friend, the Master of Dunerlacht."

"This is not the time for fooling, Tom. It is a very grave crisis for me, and there are a hun-

dred other reasons which make a different tone suitable and necessary."

"I beg your pardon, Cosmo: I forgot that I was, to a certain extent, in the house of mourning. You must forgive me, however, for feeling jolly; I can't help it, you know; but, perhaps, under the circumstances, I had better leave you?"

"I think so, Tom."

"Very well; I'll look in to-morrow, when I've sobered down a bit. At present I *must* go and laugh somewhere. When I think of the old patriarch's face—oh Lord! it's too much for me. Good-bye, Cosmo!" and Tom disappeared in convulsions. He went, like an arrow from a bow, straight to the most frequented of his clubs, and on thence to the many other centres of life and gossip which boasted his membership. At each he retailed this startling novelty, this splendid material for a *cause célèbre*; and made a most dramatic story of the discovery, in which he figured as a kind of overruling providence, righting the wronged and casting down the wicked in the naughtiness of their hearts. It was all over the town by sunset, and before that time a good many people had remembered, and remarked, that they had always detested old Germistounne, who had no merits, except in regard to his wine and his shooting, which were quite over-handicapped by his intolerable bumptiousness.

Tom dashed in to his sister's, for just one moment, before dinner, and, without sitting down, breathlessly gave her the news, asking, as he left, "How about the foundling now?"—which cast Mrs. Ravenhall into deep thought. What she *did* think about "the foundling" may perhaps be gathered from this nice little unconscious note which Cosmo received next morning:

"DEAR MR. GLENCAIRN,—I forget who my informant was, but some one of my numerous visitors, this afternoon, mentioned incidentally that Sir Robert Glencairn, whose death was announced this morning, was your uncle; and, I trust, one little word of sympathy from a not very old but a very sincere friend will not be unacceptable to you. I need scarcely say that you have been *much* in my thoughts for many months past. No true woman could but have felt for the *cruel* position in which I know you to have been *so cruelly* placed; and it touches me deeply to think that another sorrow has been added to the *great grief* which you have borne so manfully. But your uncle has served his country faithfully, and gone honorably to his rest, and this reflection will support you in your bereavement. My husband sends his kind regards and condolences. He had a very high opinion of the late Sir Robert's administrative ability. With sincere sympathy, believe me, dear Mr. Glencairn, yours very truly, LUCY RAVENHALL.

"P.S.—I observe that Sir Robert had recently assumed another name. Is it *indiscreet* to ask if this were done in consequence of succeeding to a property? In any case, it cannot be indiscreet to express a hope that, if so, you now inherit it. Dear Mr. Glencairn, I *do* so hope and trust that *happy* days are yet in store for you!

L. R.

"Belgrave Square, Wednesday evening."

Cosmo laid the note down, with a grim smile. "Tom," he said, "has lost no time."

CHAPTER LIX.

THE agitation into which the receipt of Cosmo's letter threw Lord Germistounne was very natural. He had, of course, no suspicion that Norman Douglas had ever been married. The history of that strange being was, indeed, involved in utter obscurity; but, before Lord Germistounne's father had entered on the succession opened by the death of young George, the 13th baron, the interval of time prescribed by law had been suffered to elapse, and during it every effort had been made to trace the lost heir. By the time young George died, however, Norman Glencairn had himself been some years dead, and the secret of his identity with Norman Douglas slumbered in the neglected leaves of the old pocket-Bible. Thus all searches or advertisements for him, or for any child he might have left, necessarily failed to attain their object; and in due time, the law being inferentially satisfied of his death and childlessness, the succession passed to the Germistounnes, to whom, after more than two generations of undisputed possession, the possibility of disturbance was unlikely to occur. But when a man of probity, intelligence, and position came forward and gravely asserted, not merely that Norman Douglas had been married and left descendants, but that clear evidence of these facts was in his possession, and that he himself was prepared to prove, by legal process, his legitimate descent from the individual in question, a host of terrible possibilities, and even probabilities, rushed into the old lord's mind and temporarily overwhelmed him. To contemplate the loss of everything that in his eyes made life worth having was sufficiently horrible; but to contemplate the transfer of all he prized to the men whom, of all others, he hated, was enough to madden a quieter brain. No wonder that he staggered like a drunken man, and succumbed, for a time, to this thunderbolt from a serene sky. Suspense, however, was intolerable, and, since every document purporting to bear on the question was in possession of the claiming party, suspense must endure till their evidence had been examined and an opinion as to its validity obtained. Within a couple of hours, therefore, Lord Germistounne, having so far mastered his agitation, summoned his solicitor, and in the course of the day that gentleman called upon Cosmo and possessed himself of all the facts of the case. Thereafter, he returned to his lordship with words of comfort and good cheer, born, in great measure, of his haziness on the subject of Scotch marriage-law, which, in truth, is a hazy subject, and "a marvel to many."

"My lord, I do not think that they have the shadow of a case. *Prima facie*, at least, it appears to me that it won't hold water at all. Make your mind easy, and take no notice of them. They will, in all probability, be better advised than to attempt a fight. In the mean time, silence is our true tactics."

Thus the lawyer delivered himself; but silence was, under the circumstance, impossible for Lord Germistounne. He wrote to Cosmo a violent, browbeating letter, pointing out that, since the claim to descent involved a claim to the family honors and estates, he might bring himself into perilous relations with the criminal law if he at-

tempted to establish his position upon grounds which should prove to be unauthentic, frivolous, or suspicious.

Cosmo replied in a few temperate lines, merely stating that it was impossible so momentous a matter should be permitted to remain undecided, and that an action would be at once raised to establish his father's right to the estates and title of the Dunerlacht family.

No movement was made in the matter until after Sir Robert's funeral. Then, for the first time, Mr. Glencairn, who was of a sceptical turn, came to admit, on a closer investigation of the case, that there was "something in it," and he was induced to go with Cosmo to Edinburgh for legal advice. The case was placed into the most experienced hands, and pronounced to be "full of promise." It took a considerable time to prepare, however; for reference had to be made to India, and affidavits had to be obtained from the proper officers there, establishing the authenticity of the certificates which proved the birth and marriage of Cosmo's grandfather, as well as of the birth of his father, which had also taken place in Bengal. In this way several months elapsed—months of anxiety and suspense for Cosmo, and, in a minor degree, for his father also, but which restored the equanimity of Lord Germistounne, who was satisfied, by the apparent inaction of the claimants, that their claim had been definitively abandoned.

From this fool's paradise he was rudely awakened in the early winter, by receiving notice of an action to be at once raised before the Court of Session, by which Archibald Glencairn, or Douglas, sought to establish his title to the lands of Dunerlacht and Ferniehall, now in the wrongful possession of Viscount Germistounne.

It would not be interesting to the reader were we to do more than summarize the results of the various legal processes. Suffice it to say that, after a very keen contest, conducted on either side with the highest talent and skill which the Scotch bar could produce, a decision was given unreservedly in favor of the claimant. Archibald Glencairn was pronounced to be Archibald Douglas, and the legal possessor of the estates claimed.

With regard to the family honors, the Court of Session, having no jurisdiction to decide any question as to the peerage, Mr. Douglas thereupon presented a petition to the Queen, setting forth that his right to the Dunerlacht peerage was inferentially affirmed by the judgment as to the Dunerlacht estates, and praying, therefore, that he might now be permitted to assume it. This petition was referred by her Majesty to the House of Lords, and by them to the Committee of Privileges. The hearing came on at the beginning of the Parliamentary session, and was concluded, in one or two consecutive sittings, with a celerity as satisfactory as it is unusual.

Lord Germistounne had unbounded faith in the wisdom of the Peers, and he had no doubt that their decision would be in his favor; and since this would involve the eventual reduction of the Scotch court's finding as to the estates, he confidently looked forward to his full restoration to the *status quo ante*.

The Peers, however, disappointed his lordship's anticipations. They decided unanimously

that Archibald Douglas, the petitioner, was the 15th Baron Dunerlacht, and lord of the lands of Dunerlacht and Ferniehall.

So that Archibald Douglas, the opponent, was the second Viscount Germistounne, the squire of a moderate estate in Wales, and nothing more.

CHAPTER LX.

THE new Lord Dunerlacht and his son passed the evening together on the day when the final decision was given. The former bore his honors, not meekly—for he did nothing meekly—but with profound indifference. A title was valueless, in his eyes; for though, theoretically, it altered his social position, practically it could not much affect a man who had always avoided society, and who had no intention of permitting his way of life to be disturbed, because other people might now think more of him and desire his acquaintance.

Then—with regard to the pecuniary succession—the fortune was indeed large, for the rental of the Scotch estates turned out to be considerably over thirty thousand a year; but, large as this fortune was, it produced no agitating effects on a man accustomed to vast financial operations, and to the ups and downs of financial life. It represented a grand capital, to be sure, but *unavailable* capital, for the entail stood between the family estates and speculation; and this, at a time when available capital was his great desideratum, appeared to him to neutralize, in a great degree, the value of his new acquisition.

Cosmo, on the other hand, having believed the decision in their favor to be a foregone conclusion, had long ago familiarized himself by anticipation with his new position; and two thoughts almost exclusively occupied him to-night. One was, that her father's deposition could not but be distressing to Esmè; and the other concerned the bearing which the change of circumstances might have upon his hopes of eventually winning her.

Engrossed, therefore, with very different trains of thought, father and son passed the evening without much conversation. Toward its close, the former broke a long silence by saying, "I must be going immediately, Cosmo; but, before I go, there is a matter of business to be settled between us. I am glad to say that things in the commercial world are beginning to improve: the iron business is paying its way, and some of the foreign stocks which have double-locked the remains of my capital are decidedly moving upward in value. Still, I may never be able to repay you your advance. If I ever can do so, it will be after a long delay."

"My dear father, I wish for no repayment."

"Yes, you do; at least you require money; and you shall have it, in one way or another, and at once. If my affairs ever came right, it would be my wish simply to turn the whole of this Scotch property over to you, on condition that I was never bothered about affairs I know nothing of. At present, since a man must live, that cannot be; but what I can, I will do. In the first place, I propose, of course, to give you the interest on your large advance. Don't interrupt me; that admits of no discussion. This brings

me to another point; you wish to be married, and objections to you on the score of position are now removed; may I ask if the lady has given her consent?"

"Yes, father, she has; but—"

"Very well, then, what extra income shall you require? You can ask nothing that, up to my abilities, I will not be glad to give."

"You are most good; but I fear it will still be difficult to get the young lady's father to consent. I have not yet told you that she is Lord Germistounne's daughter."

"Good heavens! What do you say?"

Cosmo repeated his statement, and Lord Dunerlacht expressed his astonishment by a prolonged whistle.

"Very strange," he said, "and very unlucky. That is a man who won't readily forgive us for recovering our rights at his expense."

"I fear not."

"I presume that the young lady is—is very attractive?"

"She has every perfection. I don't suppose that there ever yet lived any one who—"

"Exactly. Therefore, I suppose, you are not likely to abandon the idea?"

"I would far sooner abandon life. I could never live if—"

"I understand. Well, it must be managed somehow."

Lord Dunerlacht sat in deep thought for some time, and at last said,

"After all, the match ought to suit him exactly. His daughter and you are the last of the family; your marriage would unite all interests; and the family he thinks so much about would, if continued at all, be continued through his own descendants. It would really be much the same to him as having a son of his own for his successor."

"No doubt these considerations ought to have powerful influence with him; but personal interest is often sacrificed to pride and animosity. I fear this may be a case in point."

Lord Dunerlacht again reflected silently for a little, and then said, "The question I have been weighing is, whether a man like Lord Germistounne is likely to be cooled or embittered by reflection. Do you think that if the proposal were made to him at once, he might accept it, as an immediate salve to his dignity and a counterpoise to his loss?"

Whatever Cosmo's cool judgment might have said, the impatience of a lover spoke, and pronounced for immediate action.

"Very well. I will make the proposal to him myself," said Lord Dunerlacht.

"You, father?"

"Yes; he stands on forms and ceremonies, and I am now—ha! ha!—the head of the house! A proposal from me, with the offers I am prepared to make as to settlements, would probably be the best move."

"I assure you, I feel your affectionate interest very deeply, and I hope you will not misunderstand me if I beg to be allowed to see your letter before it is sent. The great thing is to avoid wounding Lord Germistounne's susceptibilities. I know him better than you do, and—"

"Say no more, Cosmo. I'll write the letter now, and you shall edit and improve it to the best of your abilities."

This was accordingly done: and though it took a long time to get the letter into a shape which Cosmo approved, that was, at last, to a certain extent achieved. It expressed, in very good taste, the writer's sympathy with Lord Germistounne under his loss of lands and title; also a desire to consult his wishes in all ways that could tend to make his loss as little irksome as possible, and to act in every way as a kinsman ought to act. The marriage was then proposed; the expediency of the arrangement—from a family point of view—was pointed out, and an offer was made to assure to the young couple such an income as Lord Germistounne himself might name as suitable. The letter was not all that Cosmo could have desired, though his father made many concessions to him in adopting what he considered a tone of unmerited courtesy, but it seemed pretty unobjectionable on the whole; and in this shape it was despatched.

The impatient lover could not complain that he was kept long in suspense. Very early next forenoon Lord Dunerlacht received the following reply:

"MY LORD,—I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of the letter which your lordship has done me the favor to address to me. As a comprehensive and sufficient answer to its contents, I beg leave to say that I must decline, for myself and for my daughter, any further communication, upon any subject whatsoever, with your lordship or your lordship's son. I have the honor to be, my lord, your lordship's most obedient, humble servant,

GERMISTOUNNE.

"The Right Honorable LORD DUNERLACHT."

"The man is a raving fanatic!" said Lord Dunerlacht, when he had given the letter to his son; "but don't be cast down, Cosmo. He'll come to his senses by-and-by, and see reason. Self-interest asserts itself in the long-run."

This philosophical reflection was cold enough comfort, however; and Cosmo *was* cast down, and very far down indeed.

In the course of the day a letter came for him, addressed, in a lady's handwriting, to

"THE MASTER OF DUNERLACHT."

It was the first time he had seen himself thus styled, and he opened it with curiosity. It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR MASTER,—I took a fancy to you, the first time I saw you (and heard you), in the House of Commons. I think I must have told you so when we met, as I generally say what I think. We all worship the rising sun—we worldlings—so you will not be surprised to find me *now* repeating that I *have* a fancy for you, and that I hope you will come and see me. While the legal decision was pending, it would have been indiscreet in me, for many reasons, to have anything to do with you; but now all is changed. It seems that you are as much my cousin, in a far-away Scotch fashion, as the poor old lord is, and I am very anxious that we should be friends. You know, of course, that I was set as a watch-dog, to guard a certain lamb from a certain wolf; and you may be certain that, if the wolf had made it necessary (which, to do him justice, he never did), I was prepared to

spring upon him and worry him without mercy. But now it turns out that he was no wolf, after all, but the most valuable animal of the flock, in disguise; so that the watch-dog is naturally anxious to cherish him, and look after his interests.

"Parables apart, I hope everything will now be soon settled, as you and dear Esmè wish. Such an arrangement would be a most sensible, not to say romantic, way of setting things to rights, allaying bitter feelings, and so forth. Come and talk to me about it. Yours very truly,

OCTOPA HAWKER.

"P.S.—Men are such wretches, the horrible thought occurs to me that prosperity may make you fickle. It generally does; but, if you do not prove an exception, you shall never more be cousin of mine, my Master; and if you don't come and see me very soon, I shall believe that you are just like all the rest of them."

Cosmo would have clung to a straw for assistance, in the renewed shipwreck of his hopes; and here was a good, sound, serviceable plank at his disposal. It is not surprising that he caught at it eagerly, and went that very afternoon to renew his acquaintance with this friendly far-away cousin. Arrived at Lady Octopa's house, Cosmo inadvertently gave his name to the servant as "Mr. Glencairn," and was thus announced.

Now, it so happened that at that very moment her ladyship was discussing the Dunerlacht decision with several friends, over afternoon tea, and, in the discussion, occupied a commanding position from her announced relationship with the parties, and also from a pretty broad hint, on her part, that she had a scheme in hand for giving romantic point and finish to a story which was admitted to be romantic. Her audience, in fact, gathered that her ladyship's matrimonial skill was about to be again tested (and no doubt with results equal to her reputation), under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty and interest. Lady Octopa, in a word, looking upon the marriage as a foregone conclusion, was discounting the success of manoeuvres which she had no reason to believe would take place, except in her own imagination.

Nothing, then, could be better timed or more welcome than this visit of Cosmo's. In a society which worships novelty, *prestige* accrues even from a remote connection with the novelty or sensation of the hour. Cosmo was unquestionably the topic of the hour, and Lady Octopa could exactly appreciate the value of his visit. His accidental introduction under what was now a misnomer gave her ladyship an admirable, almost a dramatic, opportunity of advertising to her visitors that the *topic* himself was in their midst.

"My dear Master!" she cried, going to meet him with both her hands extended, "I do call it very charming of you to come so soon—before your worries are a day over; but why *incognito*?"

"It was a very natural act of oblivion on my part, Lady Octopa," said Cosmo, in some confusion, as his hostess led him back, with an air of proprietorship, to the circle, which stared at him with the steadfast scrutiny of curiosity and criticism distinctive of the more highly cultured classes in England. The advertisement being then completed, Lady Octopa made no further

special allusions; but gave her guests what she considered a generous allowance of time to feast their eyes upon her lion, and to pick up materials for table-talk from such stray roarings as he chanced to emit. But there are limits to the greatest generosity; and when her guests had transgressed these by sitting at gaze for an unseemly time, her ladyship, who was one of those privileged persons for whom force of character or caprice of fashion secures great latitude of speech and action, suddenly gave them their *congé*.

"Now, my dear people," she cried, with charming frankness, "I am going to send you all away—all but the Master. I have only a few minutes to spare, for we are going to the play to-night, and dine early; and these few minutes I must give to my cousin, and some family matters."

So the guests went away—reluctantly, consoled, however, by the reflection that they knew more than any one else, and might *almost* say they had been present when Lady Octopa made the first move in her game of intrigue and romance, which was, no doubt, destined to culminate in one of the season's great sensations.

"Tell me why you have come so soon," was her ladyship's first question when she and Cosmo were left by themselves.

"You were so warm in your invitation, Lady Octopa, I could not think of postponing the pleasure."

"If I had been thirty years younger that might have been a correct answer: as it is—no! Young men don't rush to see old women of sixty for the pleasure of looking at their faces. Let us try again."

"Really, Lady Octopa, you are—very—very—"

Cosmo broke down, and her ladyship went on:

"Either you wish me to help you in a certain affair, or you wish to explain that I was under a misapprehension, and that what was believed to be a wolf was only a butterfly; which is it?"

"I certainly require advice and help, and if you will be so kind as to give them to me I shall be forever grateful."

"Why not have said that at once? I told you I had only five minutes to spare. You are not a butterfly, then?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well; you shall have my help. What's the matter?"

"Lord Germistounne will not listen to my proposals."

"Why? have you tried him? *since*?"

"Yes, and we received his reply this morning."

"Refusing?"

"Absolutely."

"The old goose! He will repent."

"I fear not; his tone is very decided."

"No matter; he will repent."

"But why and how?"

"For various reasons. It will be wise in him to repent; but he won't repent because he is wise, but because he is crazy. The name of Douglas of Dunerlacht is very dear to him. To be pushed out of the line of ancestry will be very grievous to him. A strange mind, you will say, which covets the ancestral position as a grand object; yes, and Germistounne has a strange mind.

He has looked forward all his life to being a Dunerlacht ancestor; and now—well, when he realizes all this, he will begin to repent. Then, if Esmè only assures him, and he can be got to believe that she will never marry any one else, he will repent altogether; for, if there is one set of people he hates worse than another, it is the Williamses, who, failing Esmè, inherit the Welsh property. So that, though he may come to a wise decision, his reasons for reaching it won't be those of a sage, you see. The dilemma will be a cruel one for him—between two hatreds. But, after all, he ought not to go hating people in the promiscuous way he does—the wretch!"

"Then you think all I can do is to wait in patience?"

"All *you* can do, but not all *I* can do. I will bring it about, Master. Leave it to me."

"My dear Lady Octopa, how good! how kind!"

"Perhaps. I like Esmè; I have a sort of fancy for you; but the affair also has attractions for its own sake. I'm quite frank with you, you see. Yes, I will bring it about; but you must promise to leave the whole affair in my hands, and not to interfere yourself or consult others."

"I promise most willingly."

"I don't like partnerships in such matters. I don't mind doing all the work, and I insist upon having all the glory. I will go and see how the land lies to-morrow, and you shall have a note reporting progress. On second thoughts, though, I won't write. You shall come here for your news. I wish that we should be friends, and we can't become friends if we never meet *en petit comite*, which we never should, if interested motives did not bring you here."

"You take a cynical view of me."

"Of men; and I don't know you, yet, to be different from the rest of them. Now, good-bye; I must go and dress. I am very glad to have seen you, and I needn't tell you to come back; the difficulty will be to keep you out of the house. *Au revoir*."

CHAPTER LXI.

THE state of Lord Germistounne's mind, when the final award was given, it would be rather hard to define. Every one else was prepared for the result, but not so his lordship, who had laughed at the finding of the Court of Session. The "Bible" marriage he had decided to be an absurdity; the "Glencairn" marriage to be invalid, from having been contracted under a false name; while the construction of a valid marriage out of these two factors involved a monstrosity beyond the consideration of sane men. He had formulated this in a phrase which had become axiomatic in his eyes—"You can't have a *composite* marriage;" and with the profoundest reverence for the wisdom of the peers, he believed that the axiom would at once be recognized as such by them. When, therefore, they trampled it underfoot, though he submitted, perforce, to their decision, the disappointment was utterly crushing. It crushed out the capability of violent wrath, replacing it with bitter chagrin and abject woe. His sensitive family pride was brayed as in a mortar. The legitimate chief of his house, the

successor of peerless paladins, was a "huckster!" Their escutcheon was tarnished, their race degraded: he felt that he himself was lowered, not by loss of the title, but by the damnification which the title had now sustained. The loss of land and money was bitter, but nothing to the loss of family *prestige*. And then, that his supplanter in everything should be his arch-foe Glencairn! this was the very abomination of desolation!

His first feeling was that he would retire in mournful dignity from the world, like a dethroned monarch. As for the new Dunerlachts, he could not dispute their title, but he would disown them, with scorn, as their ancestor had been disowned, and the real traditions of the family would die with himself. His answer to Lord Dunerlacht had been conceived in this spirit. He had ostentatiously acknowledged his rank, and at the same time, though in the tone due to rank, he had expressed his personal contempt.

In this frame of spirit Lady Octopa found him when she paid her first diplomatic visit.

She found him alone, and looking terribly broken and woe-begone. "Ah! Cousin Octopa," he said, "I am glad to see you; but if you have come to condole, let me tell you that I hate condolences."

"No, I haven't come to condole; but is the subject tabooed? Remember that my mother was a Douglas."

"You are distinctly entitled to converse with me on the family catastrophe; but I will have no condolences."

"My dear lord, be at ease on that subject; I have no heart."

"You have, however, no doubt, some feeling for the degradation of the name."

"Is the man so *very* bad?"

"He is a pestilent *roturier*."

"Come, remember he is our chief, and we ought to make the best of him. He can't be a *roturier*, whatever he is."

"I repeat that he is personally pestilent, and a *roturier* in his instincts. He will trade under our title: we shall have vans labelled, 'Lord Dunerlacht & Co., Limited,' plying in the streets of London. There are a number of members of the peerage whose fathers, or grandfathers, were picked out of the gutter, washed, and put into ermine. None of these men, even, would be guilty of such a thing; but this fellow will—I know it, I feel it."

"Not a bit of him; and I hear he is not likely to be *en evidence* at all—no one will see him. Let us make the best of him."

"How?"

"Why, the common-sense thing would be to countenance the son, and help him on in every way. He has the makings of a very distinguished man."

"An insufferable prig—a dogmatic puppy!"

"Perhaps; but a man of talent, and not a *roturier*. With your countenance, he might come to anything, and restore the dignity of the name."

"He shall have no countenance from me; and, as for the name, it is hopelessly degraded. What do you think the scoundrels have done?"

"What?"

"Why, written me this letter: there—read it."

He handed Lord Dunerlacht's letter to Lady Octopa, who read it, and said,

"The tone is proper and, I should say, gentlemanlike; though the proposal is certainly rather premature."

"*Rather* premature?"

"Well, *very* premature."

"Damnably premature, I say!"

"Well, 'damnably' premature. I'm not afraid of your brimstone words."

"'Premature' isn't the word for it at all; it is an impertinence which would not mend by keeping."

"Half the grand dames in London would be overjoyed at such an offer."

"Possibly. Thank Heaven, I'm not a grand dame."

"Maria, Marchioness of Mopus, has vowed to secure him for Lady Ermyntude."

"Maria, Marchioness of Mopus, be—"

"Stop, my dear Germistoun; I won't have a marchioness brutalized. Such a thing is quite unheard of. I am astonished!"

"I beg your ladyship's pardon. I suffer from gout. It is responsible for my indiscretion."

"I'm sorry to hear of the gout. I dare say all these worries have brought it on. Poor man!"

"Don't condole."

"I beg your lordship's pardon. I suffer from neuralgia. It is responsible for my indiscretion."

"He will trade under the title; mark my words. He will—to spite me."

"Not the young man?"

"No; the old villain. 'Lord Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited),' 'Archibald, 15th Baron Dunerlacht, & Co. (Limited)'! It's maddening!"

"I don't believe he will do anything of the sort. But even if he did, surely the *prestige* of the family is sufficient to carry off the eccentricities of one generation. In any case, a word from you would set everything to rights: you see that the tone of his letter is really deferential."

"I would not condescend to express any interest in his proceedings."

"Though you condescend to let his proceedings interest you to a 'maddening' extent?"

"I beg you, Lady Octopa, not to argue. Under present circumstances, argument is insufferable to me."

"Very well; I won't; and under present circumstances I will suspend my judgment, which was beginning to be that Lord Germistoun is not the acute and finished man of the world which the world takes him to be. Gout is, no doubt, responsible for temper, and temper clouds our views of everything. The gout being gone, the eclipse will cease."

"I think your ladyship allows yourself a considerable latitude of criticism," said Lord Germistoun, rearing himself up to the springing position.

"I always do, my dear lord; all the world knows that. Come, Germistoun, don't be cross; you know you can't frighten me—never could, since we were children. However, I won't tease you any more to-day. I believe a little teasing *has* a good effect when a man is in the dumps; but you have had enough of it for one dose, so let us change the subject. What do you think of the majority last night? etc., etc., etc."

Lady Octopa came away from the visit rather thoughtful. The thing was not to be done by a *coup de main*. The slower operations of sapping and mining must be had recourse to.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE next few weeks went past without any break in the clouds which obscured the lovers' heaven. Cosmo constantly visited Lady Octopa, but could get nothing definite from her. He must be content to wait, she said; her success was certain—of that he might be assured—but her measures required time for their development; "Wait and Trust" must be his motto. So he waited and trusted, in good heart and hope, and followed the business of his life with earnestness and energy. He spoke in the House several times, and it was clear that he was destined to make his mark there. His romantic story and accession of rank assisted his personal *prestige*. Society not only extended its hand to him, but cast out eager arms constraining him to its close embraces. These, however, he resisted in a great degree, seeking in his parliamentary duties the chief distraction of a thoughtful and otherwise somewhat solitary way of life.

Lord Germistoun's loss of fortune necessarily compelled him to alter his style of living; but he, in his *rôle* of dethroned monarch, naturally did a great deal more than was at all necessary in that way. He was still left with £7000 a year, and, since his expenditure had always been moderate, the change need not have involved any great shock. He was determined to have the shock, however. He gave up his house in Grosvenor Square, and removed to a small and rather lugubrious abode in Hans Place; he put down his carriage, and reduced the rest of his establishment to a minimum. He ceased to entertain, and declined entertainment; and abandoning, for the present, at least, all ambitions as to Esmè's marriage, which, indeed, had been conceived with reference to circumstances now non-existent, he discouraged all efforts of Lady Octopa and other friends to give the poor girl any of the distractions of society. "Under the circumstances," he said, "nothing of the sort would be seemly."

So that he was quite the dethroned monarch. Probably he would have also abdicated his parliamentary functions altogether, had not the Welsh miners again thought fit to strike—a "flagrant circumstance" which offered an alleviation to the despondency of a gouty and disgusted old age, which threatened to get the better of him; for his political instincts were thus fired by personal interest, the loss of his mineral royalties being severely felt in his altered circumstances. And so he set himself to concoct a bill for the suppression of Trades Unions by the strong arm of the law; also to compose a tremendous pamphlet, intended to pioneer the bill, and in which these associations were described in colossal language as "parts of a felonious, piratical, cosmopolitan polype, moving darkly under the surface of European society, and seeking to asphyxiate all the capital of Europe with its obscene tentacles."

A good deal of gout and general bitterness of

soul were blown off in these literary efforts, and in constant propagandist visits to the House, where he bored his brother-peers with the eternal subject of his forth-coming bill. In this characteristic way he was preserved from succumbing to his reverse of fortune during the first stage of that dire experience.

In all these chances and changes the greatest sufferer was poor Esmè, whose life was now made simply a burden to her. No hope seemed to offer promise of better days; the change in Cosmo's position only seemed to thicken the wall of separation which kept them apart. It did not enter into Lady Octopa's policy to confide to Esmè the existence of her friendly strategy, and Cosmo's name was never mentioned between them. The only occasions on which Esmè heard that name uttered were when Lord Germistoun, enraged by some new hardship arising from the change of his fortunes, loaded Cosmo and his father with maledictions as the authors of the calamity. On such occasions, too, she not uncommonly received a share of his abuse, being held, in some mysterious way, responsible for the villainies of the Glencairns, including, apparently, the audacious nuptials of Norman Glencairn and Jean Lothian.

The distractions of society were now denied to her. She was a prisoner whose solitary confinement was only relieved by the occasional companionship of an old man who had lost even such kindly characteristics as he once possessed, and who now in his best moods was bitter and cantankerous, and in his less happy moments displayed the qualities of a highly seasoned fiend.

If all sunshine, and all hope of sunshine, are taken from life, the hardiest human plant will droop and wither. If all outlet for generous and loving emotions is denied to a tender and ardent heart, it will fret itself till it break. Such was Esmè's case; she drooped and withered, and her heart was breaking. The color left her beautiful face, the light faded from her innocent eyes, and the blithesome elasticity of youthful movement was replaced by the languid gait and gestures of apathy.

CHAPTER LXIII.

LADY OCTOPA's diplomatic overtures had been renewed over and over again; she had tried many different forms of approach, but, as yet, with signal unsuccess. One day, coming to Hans Place on one of these missions, after an interval of ten days, she was startled by the change in Esmè's appearance.

"My dear child!" she cried, "what is the matter? You look like a ghost!"

"Nothing," said Esmè. When the whole life is brought down to the level of utter wretchedness—when *everything* is the matter—we find it hard to particularize, and we say, "nothing."

"Nothing! why, you are thin and pale, and—oh, you are dreadfully ill! Any one can see that. I must have Sir Cavy to see you at once. Where is your papa?"

"I believe he is in the next room; but he is unwell."

"I'll go and see him at once; I never beheld

such an object as you have become!" So saying, the vigorous dame went to the lion's den.

"Good-morning, Germistounne!" she cried, bouncing into his lordship's presence.

"Hush! hush! Lady Octopa. Pray, don't speak so loud. I am in agony—in torment. This accursed foot—oh!"

"Gout again?"

Lord Germistounne rolled his agonized eyes upon her, but, for reply, he only groaned.

"I wish to speak to you about Esmè," said Lady Octopa.

"Now, Lady Octopa, let me tell you, once for all, that I will have no more of this confounded intriguing!" cried the old lord, forgetting his foot for the moment, and sitting bolt-upright. "Let me add that I won't have 'the Glencairns' mentioned in this room. There!"

"My dear lord, you've got 'Glencairn' on the brain! I should like to know what possible interest *I* can have in them?"

"Why mention them, then?"

"I didn't mention them. Don't be a baby!"

"Your ladyship forgets yourself."

"Not a bit of it. It is about Esmè I wish to speak to you. She is very ill."

"Rubbish!"

"For you, perhaps, but not for her or for those who really love her. I tell you the child is alarmingly ill, and you must have a doctor to see her at once. Her color is gone; she is half the size she was; she looks like consumption; but I have tested the action of the heart, and I find that the mischief is *there*."

"It is a little odd, I think, that I should be the last person to observe all this."

"It *would* be in any other man, but not in your case."

"Why, pray?"

"Because you are entirely engrossed with yourself. There! that's frank. Now, now!" she cried, holding up her hand, as Lord Germistounne was going to break out, "don't try to shout me down and frighten me; you can't do it; no one can. I tell you the girl is alarmingly ill."

"I tell you she is nothing of the sort."

"Will you use your stupid old eyes?"

"Lady Octopa! I—!" But here he was interrupted by a terrific spasm, so that his sentence evaporated in miscellaneous howling.

Lady Octopa, seeing him thus impracticable, and feeling that the thin edge of the wedge was inserted, left him and went promptly to Sir Cavy Bolus, the eminent physician who advised both families.

The doctor was bland and politic, the private friend of all his patients and the confidant in many domestic mysteries, as doctors are wont to be. He was a kindly man, as it is also the wont of doctors to be, and, in fact, "a good man all round" where it was a question of managing obstreperous patients.

With him Lady Octopa dealt astutely; a ray of light had flashed upon her; she beheld a new point of departure for her manœuvres, and the doctor must be pressed into her service if it were to be utilized. She told him, then, that she had come to talk to him about Miss Douglas, whose condition caused her anxiety. She told him that there *had* been a love affair (it would never do to mix a family doctor up with a love affair *à l'esse*), that there *had* been a love affair, through

which Esmè had suffered, not merely from disappointment, but from the tyrannical conduct of her father, who, though the affair was past and gone, continued to treat her with extraordinary harshness and even cruelty. Under this, and the absolute seclusion in which he kept her, her health was breaking down—the doctor would see *that* for himself at a glance. The great thing was to get her away from her father for a little; so that while she had change of air and scene, and general distraction, her parent's bitterness might have time to evaporate. The doctor must drop in accidentally as a private friend to see her; he must be shocked by her appearance, alarm her father, and instantly order change of air. He ought to recommend sea-air, and since the best kind of sea-air was notoriously to be found at Torquay, he ought to suggest Torquay.

The doctor smiled subtly, and said that his directions must always be guided by the symptoms of his patients; but that if the symptoms were as stated, change of air would doubtless be a wise prescription. As to the sea-side, in nine cases out of ten a change to the sea-side would be beneficial. He added that Torquay was a very nice, a very balmy place. He certainly would look in soon, as a private friend, and see Miss Douglas, who was a very dear creature, in whom he felt deep interest.

In a word, Lady Octopa and the doctor, who were very fast friends, understood each other, and her ladyship felt that if it rested with him, Esmè would find herself at Torquay before many days were past.

Sir Cavy called the next day at the Germistounne's house. Miss Douglas was at home; he *was* greatly struck by her appearance, and he *could* honestly say that the state of her health *did* absolutely require change of air and scene, and, as early as possible, a relief from mental distress.

"I am sorry to find we are looking so poorly, my dear Miss Douglas," said the doctor, making straight for her pulse: "tut! tut! what's all this about? Something wrong here; we are not in our usual vigor, by any means; v-ry far from it. We must see to this." Then followed various queries, and the doctor said, presently, "We must get away out of this smoky town, for a breath of fresh air. How would a trip to the sea suit?"

"I don't care about it."

"You don't object?"

"No, I don't object."

"Supposing we were to try Torquay?"

"I have no preference for any place." This rather surprised the doctor.

"Any objection to Torquay?" he asked.

"No objection at all."

"Torquay is a very nice place; it is a v-ry balmy place. I should be inclined to say Torquay. *Shall* we say Torquay?"

"If you please, Sir Cavy, but I have no voice in the matter."

"It will not be unpleasant to you if I recommend it to Lord Germistounne?"

"No; but papa will not likely agree to go, or to let me go there."

"I am very sure papa will agree to anything I say is for your good, my dear lady."

Hereupon Esmè completed the doctor's diagnosis by bursting into tears; and he, being a doctor, did not argue with the tears, or even remark

on them; but, patting her gently on the head with a paternal hand, left her, and went to see her father.

Into that awful presence he glided with the suave confidence of an expert in the soothing system.

"How is my lord? Servant tells me we've got a touch of the old enemy?"

"My servant didn't presume to send for you, Sir Cavy?"

"Not he; I was idling about in the neighborhood, and thought I would look in and hear your news. This is not a fee visit—ha! ha! but I'll convert it into one at once, if you wish—ha! ha! ha! Let us have a look at the—tut! tut!—" (as Lord Germistonne gave a yell)—"the limb."

"Don't touch my foot! don't come near it! You must be aware, Sir Cavy, that I never consult you in a case of gout. You know nothing about gout. I treat myself, invariably."

"Well, it's not a bad plan—far from a bad plan—when the patient has got to know himself as thoroughly as you have done. What is your treatment?"

Lord Germistonne described it, was complimented by the doctor on his system, and, there being no gouty paroxysms for a time, the conversation passed to general topics, upon which Sir Cavy was fluent and entertaining. Thus his lordship was manoeuvred into a state of comparative equanimity, and then the doctor developed his attack.

"By-the-bye, I am sorry to see Miss Douglas looking so poorly."

"You have seen her?"

"I have been paying my respects in the drawing-room."

"There's nothing the matter with her."

"Nothing serious, I hope and trust; but something is wrong—I can see that."

"Stuff!"

"Come, my lord, I can't let you depose my docterial authority altogether. You're my superior in gout, we'll admit, but I must be allowed to have an opinion on general hygienics. There's a good deal of low fever going about just now."

Lord Germistonne's dread of fever amounted to a monomania, as the doctor very well knew. His lordship rose at once to the terrible idea—

"Good heavens, doctor, you don't insinuate that she has got anything so horrible?"

"One can never tell, from a superficial glance; but I'm bound to say that she has a very suggestive look about the eyes—very suggestive!"

"For God's sake, my dear Sir Cavy, go up and examine her at once."

"Well, I *do* think it would be expedient;" and up the doctor went.

"Just to have another *little* look at you, Miss Douglas, and to ask a few more questions."

This wholly superfluous visit was very soon got over, and the doctor returned to the den, looking grave and thoughtful.

"Not fever of any sort, doctor? not fever?" cried his lordship.

"No, no; make your mind easy on *that* score; but I'm bound to tell you that I find some other symptoms in my dear young friend which I don't like—far from it."

"What are they?"

"She is suffering," said the doctor, in a som-

bre tone, "from nervous depression, in a very pronounced form."

"One of your new-fangled disorders!"

"No, Lord Germistonne; it may have changed its name a score of times, but it is as old as the human frame."

"But do you mean that it is serious?"

"It is my duty to say that the consequences *may* be as serious—as possible."

"Good heavens!" cried the old lord, starting up, "what can have produced it?"

"Several causes may produce it; but acute mental distress is the commonest of all. I could not suppose that to be the cause in this instance, and I did not touch on the question of origin with Miss Douglas; but if any circumstances of that sort have existed, or do exist, your lordship is probably acquainted with them, and may act accordingly. If she is suffering from mental distress, we must, if possible, get rid of that."

"Mental distress is beyond a doctor's skill."

"True; but it can often be reached by a father's love. All this, however, is probably beside the question; but, in any case, we must act at once."

"What would you propose?" said Lord Germistonne, now quite meek and subdued. A earnest had been growing over the love which he had for Esmè, and it was broken up now by alarm, and, perhaps, also (though he would have resented the imputation) by remorse.

"Immediate change of scene," replied Sir Cavy; "you must take her to the sea."

"I can't move."

"Send some one else with her, then."

"Is it so very urgent?"

"It is my duty to say that it could not well be more urgent. She should go to-morrow."

"Where to?"

"I should be inclined to say Torquay; it is a very nice place; it is a very balmy place."

"She shall go to Torquay to-morrow!"

"Good! very good! That relieves my mind. Dear, dear, how late it is! Good-bye, my lord."

What between Lord Germistonne's gout, and his alarm, (and shall we say?) his remorse, he soon worked himself into a wild state of excitement. He sent for Esmè, and kissed and petted her, in the intervals between the paroxysms, assuring her that she was on the brink of death, and that she must fly to Torquay at once, as the only haven of refuge from the Destroyer.

Then, when she wept—for no particular reason except that her nerves were shattered—he took her tears to be protests against Torquay, and, in combating her supposed objections, he lashed himself into a fury, which was only quelled when she assured him that whatever the doctor thought necessary she would cheerfully submit to.

The question, then, was, who could be got to take her to Torquay, and to *chaperon* her till her father was able to join her? While this difficulty was under discussion, in came Lady Octopa, in rather a remarkably *apropos* way. "Well," she said, affecting ignorance of the medical episode just completed—"well; have you used your eyes? Do you see that the girl is ill? Will you send for a doctor?"

"Hush, Cousin Octopa! This is no time for a boisterous tone. The dear child is at death's door."

"My turn now to say 'rubbish!'"

"Sir Cavy has been here. I presume you will submit your opinion to his, and I have given you his opinion. He has ordered her to Torquay; she goes to-morrow. But there is this difficulty—for the life of me I can't think who I am to get to take her."

"I am sorry I can't volunteer. I am full of engagements, and several of them could not be broken without great inconvenience to other people; but surely some other friend might be able to go. What has become of your old German governess?"

"She is in Germany, with a family."

"No one else? Let me see; ah!—Torquay, you say?"

"Torquay."

"An idea has just occurred to me—so lucky!—my sister Adela has a house there this winter, and I am sure she would be delighted to receive Esmè. I'll telegraph to her at once, if you please, to offer. She will be charmed to have her, I know, if she is at home—unfortunately that's always doubtful with her: I'll telegraph, however, if you wish; shall I?"

"You are more than good, Lady Octopa. Pray do; a thousand thanks!"

As Lady Octopa had written, the day before, at great length to Lady Adela, explaining her purposes, and making the very proposal in question, her telegram only asked for a telegraphic reply as to whether Esmè could be received on the following day, and the reply, "Charmed to see you to-morrow," was sent to Esmè herself.

So Esmè went to Torquay, and Lady Octopa thought she saw her way to success at last.

CHAPTER LXIV.

It was not Lady Octopa's object that Esmè should rapidly improve in health; and Esmè met her wishes by making no improvement at Torquay. The mental distress was still there, so that the nervous depression continued. Her hostess was a weak edition of Lady Octopa, and believed in her astuter sister, to the extent of being her humble vassal at all times, and her willing instrument whenever her services were required. Inspired, then, by her sister, Lady Adela secured the services of an alarmist doctor, who was so devoted to his profession that when he got a case he made the most of it, and parted with it grudgingly. Esmè's case exactly suited him; for a case "on the nerves" is, from its nature, of an almost unlimited ductility, and may, in fact, be protracted according to the convenience of the doctor himself, whose dietum, that grave nervous depression exists, can hardly be controverted by lay opinion, or even by the personal assertion of the patient. After Esmè had been for a week or two under the "anxious observation" of this professional enthusiast, it was suggested to him by Lady Adela, under Octopian inspiration, that a consultation might be a good thing. The doctor thought that it *might* be a very good thing—for a consultation gives a sort of fillip to a jog-trot case; and a consultation took place, with the sanction of Lord Germistoun, who was now quite prostrated from the effects of his attack, which had been unusually severe.

The results of the consultation were manipulated, in a gloomy sense, by Lady Adela; and, to the effect that the learned leeches considered the case critical, were transmitted to Lord Germistoun, who was greatly alarmed and distressed thereby. He sent for Sir Cavy, and begged him to go down at once to Torquay, and make a most searching investigation of his daughter's malady. Sir Cavy went down promptly, returned, and came in person to make his report to the anxious father.

"Well, doctor, good news, I hope?" exclaimed his lordship, eagerly, when Sir Cavy presented himself.

The doctor shook his head, and sighed slightly.

"Speak out, man! don't keep me in suspense."

"I can see no improvement in my dear young friend," he said.

"Are they treating her properly?"

"Oh yes, very properly, ve-ry much so, indeed; but the symptoms don't yield—they develop. It is my duty to say this."

"Good God! what do you recommend?"

"To be frank with you, my dear lord, although the young lady has said *nothing* to me, it is my duty to say that I can see there is some brooding sorrow which is at the root of the mischief. Until we get rid of that brooding sorrow the symptoms will continue to develop, and I cannot be answerable for the results. We may go on with the present treatment—I can recommend no other; but I am not sanguine of its efficacy—not sanguine." The doctor shook his head, again slightly sighed, and went on: "I think that if your lordship were to deal frankly, as a parent may, with Miss Douglas, you would probably get a clue which might guide your action in some way; or, since you are now unable to move, you might get some lady friend of tact and experience to make the delicate investigation. Between ourselves, my dear lord, I should not say that Lady Adela is *quite* the person for such a commission—charming, brilliant, amiable, but not *quite* the person."

"She is a born idiot!"

"Tut! tut! my lord; sharp that, ve-ry sharp! Well, then, in your wide circle of friends there must be others who—"

"I'll think it over, doctor. You have made me very miserable, very miserable. Why the d—! should I be made so miserable? Everything goes wrong; no man was ever so persecuted and beset by all kinds of accursed circumstances."

"Patience! patience! my dear lord; we shall come round yet. Let us discover this brooding sorrow and eliminate it, and—"

"Confound the brooding sorrow!"

"Precisely; let us do that, and all will be well."

"Don't play with my words, Sir Cavy. Go away. You fatigue and irritate me."

The miserable old man lay awake all that night, now stung by his conscience, now maddened by his pride, now softened by love and pity. At one moment the sweet, pale face of his daughter came before him, and he thought of her as suffering, perhaps dying—this dear child, who had been an angel in his home all the days of her life, till these evil times had come.

At the next moment the thought of the "Glen-

cairus" would flash up, casting every tender thought into remote shadow, and setting ablaze all the fierce elements of the old man's nature.

Thus was his mind alternately worked upon by good and evil, as the circle of his feverish thoughts went round through the long hours of that sleepless night, and morning found him utterly prostrate.

He sent for Lady Octopa, who went to him on the instant.

"I have invited you to come here, Cousin Octopa," he said, "because you are a woman of the world and not a humbug, and I wish to consult you. You have heard from Lady Adela?"

"Yes, and I have seen Sir Cavy this morning in consequence."

"What did Sir Cavy say to you?" asked Lord Germistounne, eagerly.

"Do you wish to know his *very* words?"

"Of course I do."

"The girl is dying because her heart is breaking." That's what *he* says."

Lord Germistounne covered his face with his hands.

"I had no idea," Lady Octopa went on, "that this affair with the Master of Dunerlacht had been so very serious. It's not the way of young people nowadays, mercifully; but poor Esmè is an exception, it seems. I was coming to you, this morning, without being sent for, because, after what Adela and the doctor said, I could not take the responsibility of keeping you in ignorance of the real state of things. You'll have to make a choice between two evils, Germistounne; and you'll have to make up your mind at once—I can tell you *that*." She paused, but Lord Germistounne, with his teeth clinched and his hands pressed tightly to his face, as if in a spasm of physical pain, made no remark, and she went on:

"You must decide between losing your daughter altogether, and allowing her to marry a man whom you hate."

Lord Germistounne gave a sort of muffled shout behind his hands.

"Ah! you may roar like a bull, but that's how it stands, and of course there's no question at all about the decision; a sensible man of the world, and an affectionate father, like you, can't hesitate. Of course it's a horrible nuisance, marrying your daughter to a man you detest—I know that by experience; I hated Harriet's husband the first moment I set eyes upon him, and I loathe the sight of him now—and it's a trial to one's pride, and so on; but we can't murder our children to gratify our pride; *that's* clear."

At last Lord Germistounne spoke:

"Does Sir Cavy think that if this—this accursed resource were sanctioned, she would recover?"

"Sir Cavy is very cautious in expressing an opinion, but he says that, on the whole, he sees no reason to doubt that she would recover if her happiness were restored; while if you insist upon her being miserable you will certainly sign her death-warrant."

"I almost made up my mind this morning, and now I *have* made it up. It's infernal torture and agony to me to do it; I don't know what I've done to deserve such agony; but I can't see my child die. It will kill me—I know that; but my life is wretched now, so *that* doesn't

greatly signify—it will kill me to see her marry this—this *person*; but she must marry him?"

"Of course she must, and equally, of course, it won't kill you. In the name of common-sense, why should it? I hear but one opinion of the Master; he is a very good man, and he is full of promise. If there were no money it would be different, of course, for a fine moral nature won't pay the expenses of an establishment. Why do you hate him so?"

"I hate him—because—I hate him."

"Well, I admit that is a very sound reason; but you'll get over it."

"Never! His father—"

"His father is not going to marry Esmè."

"Look here, Lady Octopa! my consent is extorted by a morbid freak of nature, but I'll make my conditions."

"Certainly."

"I must never see this Lord Dunerlacht."

"Of course not."

"And his son, only in a formal way."

"That's quite reasonable."

"And I must have a distinct understanding that the title is not to be dragged into commerce."

"I should think there will be no difficulty about that."

"That is a *sine qua non*. And they must have Dunerlacht to live at, as *their own* house, and money enough to live in proper style."

"Quite fair. And now, you know, when you have made up your mind to do an unpleasant thing it's better to do it at once; and, besides, moments are precious. Think of the dear child's condition."

"What steps *am* I to take?"

"Send for the Master at once, and settle the matter. I'll go myself and send him to you."

"I'm not equal to the abominable agitation."

"Nonsense! you'll be all the better for having the matter off your mind. Indecision is worse than anything. I'll go and send him."

Lord Germistounne said nothing, and she went.

She went straight to Cosmo's room, and entered with her usual *nonchalance*.

"It's all settled, Master," she said. "I told you I should bring it about; and now you may congratulate me—and yourself."

"Lady Octopa! can you, do you, mean that Lord Germistounne has consented?"

"Yes; he is now prepared to say, 'Curse ye, my children, be wretched!'"

"But *consented*! It is incredible!"

"Don't take my word for it, then. You are to go directly to him and receive his parental malediction. Go at once. Don't stand sentimentalizing, but go at once. He wishes to see you, and good resolutions sometimes evaporate. Mind you be very quiet with him; stand anything he says, and submit to all his conditions; they're not alarming. Go away, now." And she almost hustled the Master out of his rooms.

The interview between him and Lord Germistounne was as brief as it was strange. When Cosmo was announced, the old gentleman lay perfectly still in bed and kept his face covered with his hands, so as to defend himself from the obnoxious aspect of his visitor. He showed no symptom of taking the initiative, so Cosmo found it necessary to say,

"I understand, my lord, that you are good enough to desire an interview with me."

Then Lord Germistonne made answer, from behind his intrenchments:

"An interview extorted by the facts that your conduct has destroyed the peace of my family, and brought my daughter to the brink of death. I don't wish to argue or talk about the matter at any length; half a dozen words will suffice. You have wrecked my unhappy girl in mind and body, you have destroyed her life, but I cannot take the responsibility of causing her actual death, which, it appears, might probably happen were she to be longer thwarted in the morbid and disastrous affection which she has conceived for you; and my prohibition of the marriage is, therefore, withdrawn."

Cosmo thought it prudent to hold his peace, and Lord Germistonne went on:

"There are one or two conditions to my consent which you will note and consider essential; as follows:

"I must never be brought into contact with your father.

"My intercourse with you must be rare and formal.

"The title which your father now possesses must not be employed as a trade advertisement. He must trade under a pseudonym. Dunerlacht Castle must be made over to you as a residence, and an income suitable to the style and dignity of the place must be secured to you. Are you in a position to guarantee these conditions?"

"Yes, Lord Germistonne, I am; I know that my father will accede to them all. I trust, however, that time will alter the condition which affects the relations between you and me. I do trust that our intercourse may at least become friendly, if it cannot be affectionate."

"Our intercourse shall, as I have said, be rare and formal. That is definitive."

"I presume, my lord, that you will not make restrictions as to the date of the marriage?"

"Considering the grounds on which alone it is sanctioned, there can be no objection to its early accomplishment, but the contrary. You can settle the matter with my daughter; I wash my hands of the whole deplorable transaction. I will not detain you, sir."

"My lord, you will give me your hand before I go? Pray remember that I am, at least, a gentleman."

"As a matter of form, I will do so."

A cold, sharp, aquiline claw just touched Cosmo's hand, and the meeting was at an end.

Within a couple of hours Cosmo was on his way to Torquay, not having given himself time, in any way, to prepare Esmè, who was, of course, unconscious of the friendly plot of which she was the centre—who had no suspicion of the strange process of evolution by which it was designed that her joy should develop from her sorrow.

CHAPTER LXV.

"THE Master of Dunerlacht!"

When the servant threw open the door of Lady Adela's drawing-room and made this announcement, Esmè was sitting there alone. It was

thoughtless and man-like of Cosmo to come on her thus unawares. She heard the name; she beheld her lover; the joy in his face flashed into her mind the glad import of his presence there. But even the little fringe of light, which tells of a silver lining, had faded from the cloud which overshadowed her life, and the sudden blaze of happiness was more than she could bear; it overwhelmed and blinded her. Everything became dark, and she would have fallen had not Cosmo caught her in his arms.

"Is it a dream?" were the first words she murmured, after an interval of half-unconsciousness.

"No, dearest; it is the end of dreams. The night is over, and winter is gone."

Often, on the summit of some grand Highland mountain, we find ourselves wrapped in a sudden twilight of cloud and mist. We can see nothing but our dim prison walls, and we dare not move, for we know that around us there are precipices and danger manifold. The vapor-masses mould themselves to peak and ledge, and cling about the rocks with cruel immobility. We feel that we are lost, and our hearts fail us, for the day is far spent.

Then suddenly comes a breath from heaven, which whispers the mandate of our release. In an instant we see the blue vault and the glorious sun; the walls of our environment are transformed to flying wreaths of light and beauty; below us is the sea, sapphire-like, smiling in its summer sleep; and beyond it sun-bright stretches of champaign, and billowy foliage of gladsome woods, and the pure purple of cloudless hills, glowing like gems in the horizon's golden zone.

CHAPTER LXVI.

HAPPINESS is the best of remedies, and on a bright summer morning, six weeks after Esmè's lover had found her drooping like a dying flower, an immense assemblage which thronged the church of St. Peter's, in Eaton Square, beheld in her a bride, the radiance of whose beauty and happiness seemed to express the spirit of the blithe and beauteous summer-time.

There was a "movement" of admiration as she passed up the aisle, supported by, or rather, as it seemed, supporting her father, who moved with tottering gait but head erect, and wearing on his grim old features an expression which would have done credit to Agamemnon, in the act of leading Iphigenia to the sacrifice. A few minutes earlier, the Master of Dunerlacht had entered, attended by Tom Wyedale, the latter radiant with triumph at having, by a series of masterly manoeuvres, supplanted Phil Denwick in the post of "best man," for which Phil had been designed by the bridegroom.

Though the church was crowded the invited guests were few in number; but among their number, near the altar, were to be observed certain forms familiar to us as having played some part in the drama now drawing to a close.

Mrs. Ravenhall wept aggressively in the foremost pew, where she had established herself next to the 15th Baron Dunerlacht. From his lordship's other side, his sister Griselda cast baleful

glances on the happy scene, and confided to her brother, in a rusty whisper, that Viscount Germinstone satisfied her conceptions of a cockatrice. Lady Octopa was there, majestically content; her air seemed to say, "Behold my handiwork!" And Lady Adela was, of course, also there, to whom Sir Cavy murmured slyly that the air of Torquay was very balmy, and had really worked miracles for his dear young friend. A few others whom we have met were within the charmed circle, and a few others whom we have not met; and, outside it, one or two not unknown to us—conspicuously, Lady Bugles, whose sombre head loomed darkling behind the splendid coruscations of the bridal party.

When the knot was tied, Cosmo and his bride moved down the aisle, under the inevitable thunder of the "Wedding March." The family romance was universally known, and the young couple were surveyed with breathless interest as they passed. People said that a nobler-looking pair had never met their eyes. If these admiring critics had known that their external gifts were poor compared with their graces of mind and spirit, they would have considered them still more an exceptional couple.

The wedding breakfast was given at Lady Octopa's house, the abode of Lord Germinstone, in Hans Place, not being equal to the occasion. At first it threatened to be a *triste* affair, for the well-known antagonism of the two old lords, who had to be separated at table by a wide zone of neutrality, cast a certain gloom over the proceedings. Tom Wyedale, however, exerted himself in the most manful way to counteract this; and since no one else would make a speech, he spoke for everybody. He proposed toasts and responded to the same himself, and thus personated, in rapid succession, the bridesmaids, the bride's father, the bridegroom's father, Lady Octopa, and others, including Miss Griselda Douglas—(who carried away the firm conviction that Tom was "The Man of Sin")—with a power of reckless fun born of wit, good-will, and dry champagne, which worked, at last, a complete success. In his oratorical dealings with Lord Germinstone he employed all the subtle tact with which he had originally conquered that difficult personage, and at last succeeded in producing a smile on his iron features. Tom's genial nature always prompted him to make things pleasant, and he saw at this critical banquet the chance of making things pleasant for the young couple in a permanent way. So he spared no pains, and perhaps his pains were not altogether wasted. It is certain that, ever after, he took immense credit to himself as the author of happier relations between Lord Germinstone and his son-in-law; and explained that if Phil Denwick had been placed in the prominent position of "best man," nothing of the sort could have occurred. It was, he said, with this view that he had supplanted Phil, who was "really quite an outsider where anything like *savoir faire* was concerned." When the hour of departure had arrived, Esmè went into a little anteroom to take a private farewell of her father. When the old man came to her, and saw her thus about to leave him finally—saw finally passing away from him that dear companionship which, ever since Esmè's birth, had preserved some tender feeling in his nature, he was at length overcome. There flowed into his mind

a thousand touching recollections of her happy, innocent childhood, and her happy, loving, dutiful youth. His heart was moved; he took her gently in his arms; he could not speak, but he looked at her, fondly and sadly, through eyes dimmed with an unwonted moisture.

"Dear papa!" said Esmè, at last, "your heart has come back to me; promise that you will never take it away again."

Her father kissed her, and she went on, encouraged:

"You wish me to be *quite* happy, papa, do you not?" and again, in the same tender fashion, the old man signified his assent.

"But how can I be quite, *quite* happy, when there is enmity and coldness between those who are dearest to me? O papa! papa! you do know—because you said so yourself, even before you knew that he was a Douglas—you do know how good and chivalrous he is; and it is not his fault that we have lost Dunerlacht; and I know that he will respect all your wishes, because he feels your hardships so keenly—if you only, only know how keenly! O papa! be kind to him, and he will love you as I love you, and we shall be together again, and you will not be lonely. How can I ever be happy if you are lonely and desolate? You *wish* me to be happy, papa? *make* me happy by saying that you trust him and will be his friend. Say it, dear papa, say it; I will not leave you till you say it!"

She clung to him and poured forth her words with passionate utterance, and the heart of the old man was turned.

"You shall be happy, dear child," he said, at last, "if I can make you happy. Bring your husband."

Cosmo was soon there, and the old lord, by a supreme inspiration and effort of his good angel, spoke thus:

"You are the future head of our house, Master," he said, "and I cannot deny that you are an honorable man. It is a great thing to know *that*. It is a great thing to know that you will not discredit the name. We must try to be friends. You have taken away from me the Douglas lands and the old Douglas title, and you are taking away from me this child, almost the last, and certainly the best, of my possessions. I grudge them all to you—God help me! I am only a man. But I will try to like you, for her sake; I swear I will. Here is my hand."

To which the Master replied:

"And for her sake, Lord Germinstone, I will swear not only to like you, but to be your son, if you will allow me. The Douglas lands and honors are great and splendid, but she is above them all, and I would gladly have given them all, a thousand times, to win her own dear self."

They clasped hands cordially, and the cup of Esmè's happiness was full.

Shortly after, volleys of rice and satin slippers darkened the Belgravian atmosphere, in which haze the lovers should now disappear from the pages of an orthodox novel. Let us have one little glimpse of them, however, after their return from the wedding trip, which, wherever else it took them, took them, we may be sure, to the Lake of Como.

When Tom made the genealogical discovery in Cosmo's rooms, it may be remembered that the spirit of prophecy fell upon him, and that he

uttered certain predictions. All those bearing on the lawsuit had been literally fulfilled; and now the highly important one which foretold that Dunerlacht grouse should die by Tom's hand on the "Twelfth" of the following year was verified. For Cosmo and Esmè returned to their Highland home a little before that anniversary, and Tom was the life of the party which came together there on the 11th. It had occurred to him that his amusement would be enhanced if the marquis (for whose society Tom had what Lord Germistounne called "a morbid inclination") were also of the party; so of course he had managed that. The marquis *was* there, in all his mysterious panoply, wearing his *cor de chasse* without molestation, and breathing forth threats against the *fauna* of Glenelacht, which, if carried into effect, must leave the district without fur or feather.

The managing partner of Glencairn & Co.—now on the high-road to recover its ancient prosperity and *prestige*—was also present. In him was to be recognized our friend Phil Denwick, whose energy and ability had nobly seconded Cosmo's efforts to procure for him the promotion he had lately obtained. The senior partner of his firm, who "traded under a pseudonym," was not of the party. He was immersed in his old pursuits at Edlisfort; toiling to rebuild the edifice of his fortunes, which had been levelled by the reckless hands of the now secluded Hopper. Nor did the bride's father adorn the scene; but his daughter was at ease about him. In the agreeable company of his friend Sir Cavy he was enjoying the salubrious waters and distractions of Homburg, and wrote cheerfully, and in a spirit of peace and good-will. The party at the castle was full of pleasant elements, and there were no regrettable blanks, even Mrs. Ravenhall's absence not being specially remarked from that point of view.

A great bag was achieved on the "Twelfth." In addition to what Davidson called "a tremendous bird," it displayed a few novel elements, and, conspicuously, a very fine sheep which had imprudently loitered within the sphere of the marquis's operations. That he was dubbed of the *Toison d'or* by his friend "Torm" was a matter of course, and that "Le massacre d'un monton" became a favorite sequel to Tom's narrative of "La bête fauve sans tête," which, as developed by his daring fancy, had achieved a wide popularity.

It may be remembered that the next day was Esmè's birthday; and, it being her twenty-first birthday, at night twenty-one rockets went up from beside the bonfire on Dunerlacht, and the tenants' banquet and ball took place. In short, the occasion was commemorated with the old rejoicings, but with a relaxation of fendal observance which was much to the advantage of Mr. and Mrs. M'Haffie's nervous systems. As it was also a red-letter day in the calendar of their love, Cosmo did not go to the moor, but remained at

home and kept the doubly-sacred anniversary with his wife.

In the afternoon they visited the ruins and the Fall, for the first time since their return—for the first time, that is to say, since that spot had been the scene of their desolate farewells.

Once more they sat down, side by side, above the great abyss; and once more, amidst a hundred landmarks, traced their love's familiar story. Here it had trembled on the brink of a first utterance; here it had mingled the voice of its anguish with the lamentations of the mighty waters; here it had seen in the foam-bow's arch the symbol of a way across the storm and stress of adverse circumstance. Anguish, discord, lamentation, were silenced now—drowned in the great music which filled their lives to overflowing. The foam-bow had been quenched, but quenched by the sovereign glory of the sun. Thus they sat through the happy hours, gilding with fond lovers' fancies the refined gold of their peace, and thankfulness, and joy. It was not till the day was dying, that an interruption came to remind them of hungry guests awaiting them at home. It came in the form of old Maggie; once again that inevitable apparition stood before them, and sang and said, in her old style,

"Hey the bonny! ho the bonny!
Hey the bonny breast-knots!
Bythe and merry were we a',
When we pit on the breast-knots!"

"Ye're welcome hame, my bonny leddy! and ye're welcome hame, my braw Maister! Eh! but ye *are* welcome hame—'tane and tither, haith thegither.' Praise be blessed!"

"Thank you, Maggie; we're very, very glad to be home, and very glad to see you again," said Esmè.

"And we've lost no time in paying you a visit, Maggie," said Cosmo.

"Veesit me? Hoot awa', my bonny Maister! Hoot awa'! Eh, Maister, I tell ye I was nae spae-wife, but am I *no* a spae-wife? 'Ye'll be a baron bauld,' quo I; and are ye *no* a baron bauld? I said ye was sly; and eh, Maister, but ye *was* sly. Ye've ta'en a' thing—gudes an' gear, house an' ha', mailen an' biggen, an' a lass that's the wale o' the warld forbye. I'm a spae-wife noo, and aiblins ye'll cross auld Maggie's han' wi' siller, for the luck that's come and the gude that's comin'."

Cosmo gave her a piece of gold, and, wishing her good-night, he and Esmè turned in haste to go.

"What's yer hurry?" cried Maggie. "Bide a wee, till I sing ye 'Huntingtower.'"

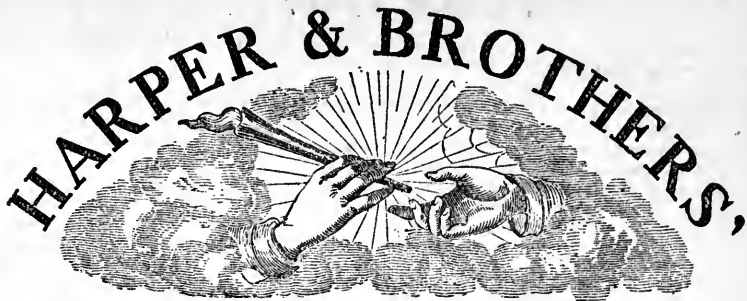
"Not to-night, Maggie, we're terribly late."

"Ae verse, then?"

"Well, then, one, but only one."

"I'll sing the last; it's the bonniest:

"Huntingtower is mine, lassie!
Huntingtower is mine, Jeanie!
Huntingtower an' a' Blairgower,
And a' that's mine is THINE, lassie!"



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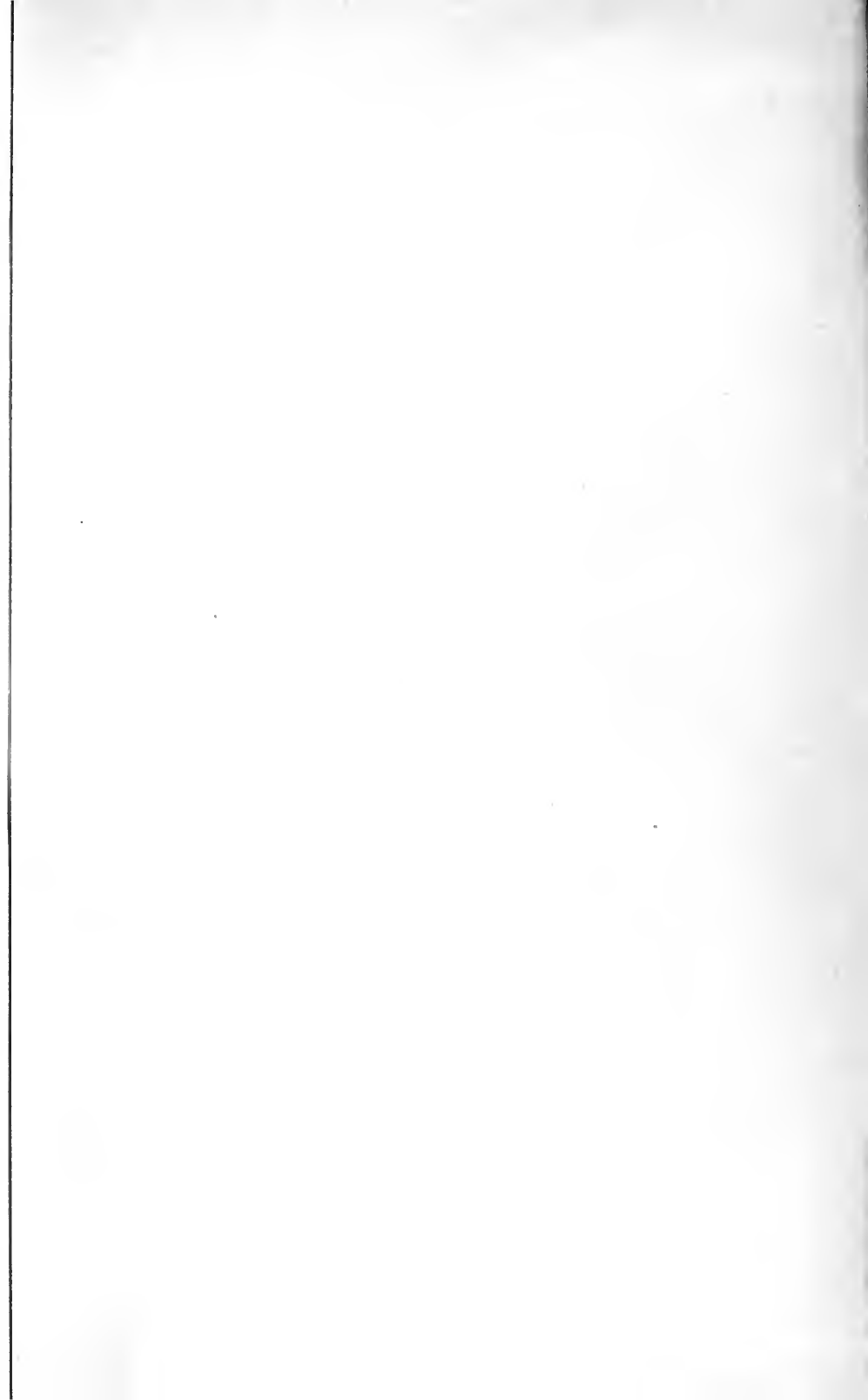
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